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The arguments for
predestination and necessity



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THE
ARGUMENTS
FOR
PREDESTINATION AND NECESSITY
Contrasted,
&c. &c.

THE
ARGUMENTS
FOR
PREDESTINATION AND NECESSITY
Contrasted
WITH THE
ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES
OF
PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY.

IN TWO ACT SERMONS,
FOR THE DEGREES OF B. D. AND D. D.
IN TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN, 1828,
WITH NOTES AND APPENDIX.

BY
RICHARD HASTINGS GRAVES, D. D.

LONDON :
PRINTED FOR HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.
AND
A. & W. WATSON, DUBLIN.
1829.

TO
THE MEMORY
OF
THE VERY REV^D RICHARD GRAVES, D. D.

DEAN OF ARDAGH,
- AND
KING'S PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY
IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN,

Whose Writings have so much Contributed to raise
the Literary Character
OF HIS UNIVERSITY,

The Piety of whose Example, and whose Exertions as their Teacher,
Have widely increased the Zeal and Knowledge,
Of the Junior Members, of

THE CHURCH OF IRELAND,

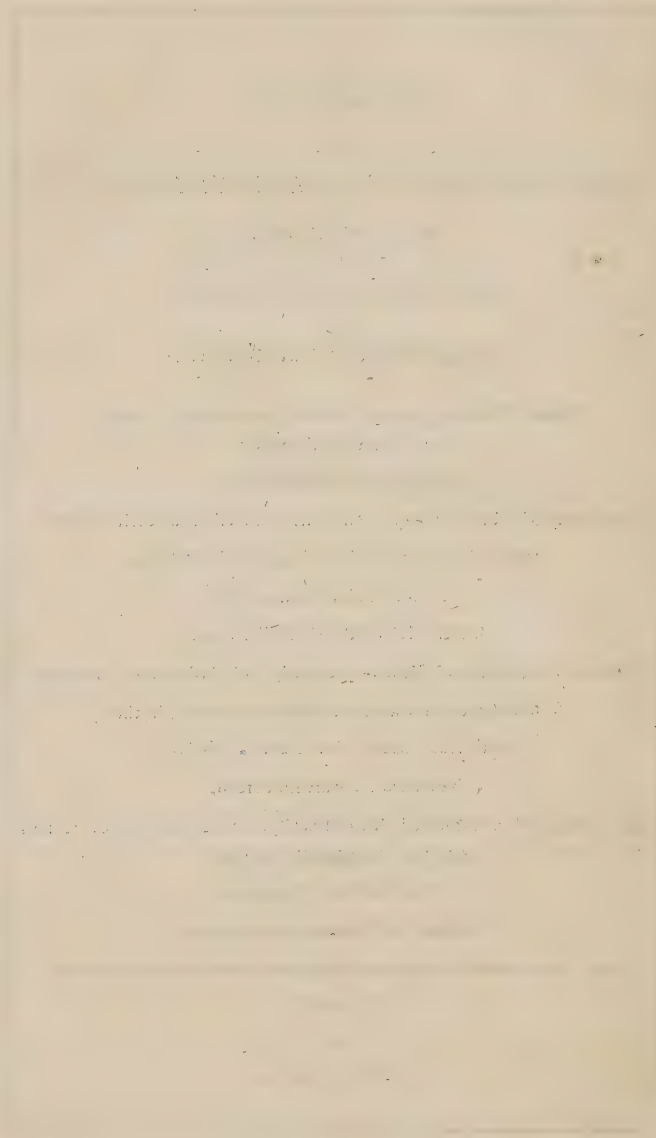
Whose Benevolence of Heart, peculiarly both Ardent and Universal,
While it glowed with the strongest affections, in the
PRIVATE CIRCLE OF HIS FAMILY,

Yet shed it's warmth abroad,
And diffused it's own sweet Spirit of Charity, through the various scenes,
OF HIS PUBLICK DUTIES,

The following Discourses,
Prepared for Publication at his desire,
Are, with a proud, though sorrowing sentiment, of Filial Affection,

INSCRIBED

BY
THE AUTHOR.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE greater part of the following pages, had already passed through the press, when it was the will of Providence, to remove to his rest in Christ, him, at whose desire alone, this publication was commenced.

By this event, the Author was deprived of his chief inducement, to proceed in an undertaking, in which, likewise, his increased delicacy of health, rendered it imprudent to persevere. This must account for the omission—though nearly ready for the press—of some of the Appendix referred to in the Preface, and of some other articles, which might perhaps have rendered this work more commensurate, than it is at present, with it's original design. While, therefore, in venturing before the publick, the Author is only fulfilling the wishes of one, whom he was bound to obey, he trusts, that the foregoing will be admitted as some excuse, for these, and for the various other imperfections, of the present publication.

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i.	last	after ' Appendix' for	II	read, I
iv.	11	after ' Character' for	;	— ,
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—	24	for ' it : if,'		— it. If
—	28	for ' before he have,'		— before he has
vi	5	for ' e're he have,'		— e'er he has
viii	11	for ' characteristic'		— characteristick
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xi	3	of Note for ' Irresistable '		— Irresistible
xiii	2	after ' profession' for	;	— ,
xiv	2	for ' appeals'		— appeal
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25	5	from bottom, for ' it argues'		— argues
27	6	for ' subtleties'		— subtilties
30	5	for ' ever murmuring'		— murmuring
36	10	of Note, for ' worthy proceed'		— worthy, to proceed
38	2	from bottom, for ' inflection'		— inflection
44	11	at beginning of line,		insert, IV
—	2	from bottom, for ' reasoning'		read, reasonings
51	last	of text, for ' subtleties'		— subtilties
54	8	for ' humillity'		— humility
57	1	for ' subtil'		— subtile
59	2	for ' phantoms'		— phantasms
—	10	of Note, after ' Scripture' for	;	— ,
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—	21	erase (") at the beginning of the line		
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95	6	for ' incompatable'		— incompatible
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105	3	from bottom, for ' eap every'		— leap every
108	1	for ' encrease'		— increase
109	18	for ' is that'		— is : that
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—	25	for ' that firm'		— their firm
143	4	from bottom, note, ' gifts af grace'		— gifts of grace
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188	3	for ' Irresistble'		— Irresistible
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PREFACE.

EVER since Bacon prepared the way for the emancipation of Philosophy, from the trammels of the Schools ; by proposing to substitute experimental inquiry for verbal disputes, and inductions from facts for hypothetical speculations ; the physical sciences have made a steady and glorious progress. Those also who have applied a similar method to the philosophy of the human mind, or the investigations of natural theology, have obtained a proportionate degree of success.

Notwithstanding however, the present improved state of Philosophy, the advocates of Absolute Predestination, are too apt to neglect the examination of facts and experience, and to bewilder themselves in the reveries of abstract speculation.¹

¹ See Appendix II.

I. This doctrine, when considered as a tenet of *natural religion*, is generally defended by arguments purely Metaphysical. The object then, of the first of the following Discourses, is to examine how far the *general* system of reasoning thus adopted, in support of Absolute Predestination, is consistent with the true principles of philosophy.

II. Happily for the unlearned Christian, he stands in no need of philosophy, while he studies, and obeys, with *humble sincerity*, those scriptures, which are “able to make him wise unto “salvation.” But, unfortunately, even into the interpretation of these sacred oracles, the advocate of Predestination, is too fond of introducing metaphysical subtleties; by dogmatizing on insulated texts,² to the manifest exclusion, of the copious and varied details of facts, which are therein expressly treasured up for our instruction. To enter into an examination of the passages, whose meaning is, as I conceive, thus perverted, would be beside my purpose. All therefore, that I have attempted in the second Discourse is to assign to the *facts* of Revelation *generally considered*, that rank and value, which should be properly allowed to them, in every attempt to ascertain from Scripture, the charac-

² See Appendix vi.

ter of God's Moral Government ; or in other words, to investigate what may not improperly be termed, the *Philosophy of Revelation*.

The limits usually prescribed, to discourses originally intended only for delivery from the Pulpit ; together with the popular character, and practical applications, usually expected in them ; have precluded any thing more than general suggestions, toward the adoption of a Philosophical system of reasoning, in investigating the subject proposed ; but I am inclined to believe, that their more detailed application, would be found to confirm the views, I have ventured to advance.

The Appendix annexed to each Discourse, contain some further illustrations of points which could only be alluded to in the text, together with authorities for such assertions as seemed most to require it.

It is the declaration of an inspired Apostle that, " He that cometh unto God, must believe " that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them " that diligently seek him ;" ³or, in other words, the reforming efficacy of any man's religion must depend on the firmness and sincerity of his belief in these two propositions ; the exis-

³ Heb. xi. 6.

tence of a Sovereign Ruler ; and the benevolence and justice of his character as a Moral Governor. And it is after *vindicating in this respect* his previous dealings to Jew and Gentile, that the same Apostle concludes it to be our “reasonable service,” to present “our bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God.” ⁴

Any tenets, therefore, which have a tendency to promote in the mind, opposite views of the Divine Character ; or of the Divine Economy, cannot be regarded ; as calculated to establish Religion, on the intelligible, attractive and practical basis here laid down : and as far as they deviate therefrom, they cannot be considered as doctrines “according to godliness.” ⁵

Absolute or irrespective Predestination, with its legitimate consequences, seems to me, when *abstractedly considered*, to be liable to such an imputation ; I say, *abstractedly* considered ; for, when joined to the honest and faithful promulgation of Gospel Mercy, its dangerous tendencies are greatly counteracted. There is, indeed, in the Revelation of Christ crucified, such an overflowing exhibition of infinite love and goodness, as is calculated, under Divine Grace, to soften and subdue the most prejudiced

⁴ Rom. xii. 1.

⁵ 1 Tim. vi. 3. See also Appendix vii.

heart ; and in spite of all previous speculative errors, to lead it to contemplate God, in the Redeemer, as a gracious and heavenly Father. In whatever soul then, the love of the Saviour abounds, and exactly in proportion as it predominates, will practically obviate or control the danger of metaphysical errors, “ casting down “ imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and “ bringing into captivity every thought to the “ obedience of Christ.” ⁶ But, alas ! how few are those faithful servants who are ever thus ready to “ count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.” ⁷ On the contrary the great bulk of mankind are more addicted to reason than to feel,—to speculate than to obey,—to profess than to practise, Christianity. On these all the dangerous tendencies of the Doctrine in question, are but too likely to take effect.

An abstract belief in *Irrespective final* Predestination, is dangerous to the *beginner* in Divine things, in whatever light he may view it : if he be of a sanguine temperament ; he runs the risk of appropriating its blessedness to himself, without sufficient warrant ; and with a premature joy, accounting his salvation secured, before he have given “ diligence, to make his

⁶ 2 Cor. x. 5.

⁷ Phil. iii. 8.

“calling and election sure.”⁸ Thus relying on the certainty of success, and acknowledging no danger of “shipwreck”⁹ to his faith; he may vainly fancy that he has reached “the haven “where he would be,”¹ e’er he have yet pushed his, perhaps, unprovided bark from the shore; or essayed its strength to “pass the waves of this troublesome world,” to stand the tossings of affliction, or the tempestuous strife of passion. On the other hand, if less self-confiding, he may, while contemplating the straitness of the gate and the narrowness of the way,² where no guide but *irresistable grace* can conduct, and none but the *elect* can follow, be beguiled to await in mistaken expectation of an *effectual calling*; and having thus wasted the precious hours of grace, that are “called to-day,”³ he may, find himself involved in hopeless night, before he have yet commenced his journey.

Equally dangerous is the abstract contemplation of this doctrine, to him who is *labouring under religious dejection*. Such a person, having found out the “plague of his own heart;”⁴ and being bowed down by the load of his offences, accumulated, perhaps, by repetitions against grace and knowledge, of “that sin that

⁸ 1 Pet. i. 10. ⁹ 1 Tim. i. 19. ¹ Ps. cvii. 30.

² Matt. vii. 13, 14. ³ Heb. iii. 13.

⁴ 1 Kings viii. 38.

“doth easily beset him;” ⁵ instead of bringing his burthen anew to the foot of the cross, may discover, in its ceaseless pressure, a proof that he belongs to the reprobate; and sink under its weight into reckless and hopeless despair.

Nor are those elated with *spiritual pride* beyond its fearful influence; while believing that their names are already “written in the book of life” ⁶ and speaking peace to their souls, though they be still walking “in the imagination of their hearts;” ⁷ they may forget, to “perfect holiness in the *fear* of the Lord,” ⁸ that “holiness without which no man shall see God.” ⁹

But worst of all is, the almost insurmountable obstacle that it presents in the very outset; to every rational attempt, to convince and correct the *sceptic or unbeliever*. For, to describe our Moral Governor, as selecting, before they were born, some individuals for eternal happiness, and dooming others to everlasting misery, without being influenced (*as the moving cause of such selection*) by any regard to their foreknown characters, actions, motives or feelings; ¹ is surely to represent the God of Christianity, as any thing, but a “rewarder of them that diligently

⁵ Heb. xii. 1.

⁶ Rev. xiii. 8.

⁷ Deut. xxix. 19.

⁸ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

⁹ Heb. xii. 14.

¹ See Appendix iv.

“ seek him ;” and obedience to him as any thing but a “ reasonable service.” ²

In addition : are there not grounds to fear, that the doctrine of Absolute Election, when received (and it is so when abstractedly considered) ³ as the source and cause of all spiritual blessing here, and eternal happiness hereafter ; may have a dangerous tendency, to withdraw the contemplation, and in a proportionate degree the affections ; from that distinguishing characteristic of the Gospel ; the doctrine of “ Christ, and him crucified.” ⁴ “ The gospel “ of Christ ” is indeed, “ the power of God “ unto salvation to every one that believeth,” ⁵ but it is so, through “ the preaching of the “ cross.” ⁶ And is there no danger here of setting up *irrespective election* in place of “ Christ ” as “ the power of God and the wisdom of “ God ? : ” ⁷ is there no danger here, “ lest the “ cross of Christ should be made of none “ effect,?” ⁸ that cross around which all the hopes and affections of the christian, should be ever taught to cling and cluster, in the abounding fruits of faith, gratitude, and love.

These considerations should, I think, be ad-

² Calvin himself admitted that great dangers were incident to Predestination. See Appendix viii.

³ See Appendix ix. ⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 2. ⁵ Rom. i. 16.

⁶ 1 Cor. i. 18. ⁷ 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. ⁸ 1 Cor. i. 17.

mitted, as sufficient ground for any attempt, however humble, to investigate the reasonableness of a doctrine, which *appears* at least, to have such dangerous tendencies. And, if such an inquiry be conducted with moderation and temper; it cannot surely, be disserviceable to the cause of truth; Nay, though it may not terminate, in reconciling speculative differences, it may conduce to a much more important, because a *practical*, result. It may lead both sides, to propound their opinions, with such scriptural guards and cautions, as shall secure them, at least to a certain extent, from degenerating into the errors, to which they are respectively liable.

On these grounds, therefore, I trust that in the discussion of this subject, I shall be acquitted of prejudiced views, and a controversial spirit, by pious and candid Christians of opposite sentiments: any of whom, I should regret to offend; and some of whom, I have long esteemed it a privilege, to call my friends.

I rejoice, indeed, in reflecting that the times are passed away; when a diversity of sentiment on this subject, excited animosity and misrepresentation: and that *now* it can be discussed, (as every question ought to be by Christians,) in a spirit of charity and mutual forbearance:

each side admitting in the other, sincerity of motive ; and making allowance for the bias of judgment, arising from differences of education, and previous habits of thought : but above all, keeping it continually in mind, that imperfection must ever characterise the investigation by finite capacities, of such high and mysterious themes.

In addition ; it has long appeared to me ; that it might very much conduce to calm men's spirits in the consideration of this subject ; if they would but reflect, that the same, or very *similar* differences of opinion, have divided the wise and learned, of almost all ages and countries : and that *both* sides of the controversy, have found strenuous supporters among those, who either never heard, or never received the Gospel.⁹ Surely then, unless it can be clearly proved, that Scripture has expressly and definitively decided the matter ; Christians, of whichever side, should not regard the adoption of their own opinions on this point, as a test of genuine Christianity ; much less condemn their opponents as departing from the faith of the Gospel. On the contrary, leaving the *abstract* question open to the investigations of Natural Theology ; they should look among the *peculiarities of Christianity*

⁹ See Appendix ii.

itself, for some more certain and appropriate criterion, of sound and orthodox belief.

Were such false tests to be *mutually* abandoned ; the pious of both sides, might be better prepared, to meet each other, in the full spirit of the Apostle's maxim ; " I determined to " know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, " and him crucified." ¹

I have only further to add ; that I have preferred using in all cases, the term *Irrespective Predestination* ² to *Calvinism* ; in order to designate the doctrine to which I am opposed.

Calvinism, in its popular sense, embraces not only the *five points* peculiar to itself ; but other Doctrines, which even its opponents, justly value as of vital importance. It is therefore essential, to the cause of evangelical truth, that both parties should carefully avoid all such mis-statements of each others tenets ; as might prevent their cordially uniting, in support of their common Christianity.

In addition, it may be observed ; that many

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 2.

² I mean Irrespective Predestination to *final salvation* or Reprobation ; with which I suppose connected the doctrine of Irresistible Grace, sometimes styled *invincible, indefectible, effectual*. I believe it may be fairly stated that these two dogmas are seldom separated.

modern Calvinists reject some of the five points alluded to, though they hold the others.³ *Abstractedly considered*, I confess I cannot see how they can be consistently separated: and many Anti-Calvinists, too apt to attribute the

³ “The great majority of those, who pass under the general denomination, in modern times, regard some of Calvin’s positions as mere exceptionable inferences, which he has drawn from parts of his own system with too much haste, or too little caution. They consider these inferences (especially some deduced from the doctrine of divine decrees,) as injurious excrescences, which deform the general beauty of his theological scheme, and which do not contribute to its real strength. In brief, they consider his fundamental premises, viewed in their proper light, as neither requiring nor admitting some of his conclusions, which have given just offence to a large portion of christians who still retain his name.” (Williams’s *Defence of Modern Calvinism*, Preface p. iv, v. Lond. 1812.) “By modern Calvinism,” says the same Author, “I would be understood, to mean, *that system of religion which represents the Sovereignty of Divine Grace, without encroaching on the equity of Divine Government*, for instance, it represents God as decreeing all the good in the created universe, but, in a strict and absolute sense, no evil; as predestinating some to life and salvation, without being unjust to any; as foreseeing all things, without appointing sin; as bestowing grace, in perfect consistency with the freedom, the *absolute freedom of the human will* in its natural actions. It maintains justification by faith without depreciating good works; the certainty of the event of Salvation, consistently with the use of means; in few words, the glories of the divine prerogative in bestowing good in a manner perfectly consistent with *moral obligation*, and the honor of *divine justice*, in punishing

separation, to disingenousness, and insincerity of profession ; endeavour to compel their opponents, to admit all, or surrender all.

But what, if the modern Calvinist, abandon-

none but those who *deserve punishment*, and according to the degree of their desert." (Williams's Equity of Divine Government and Sovereignty of Divine Grace. page 144 Lond. 1813.)

To comprehend how even the most moderate Calvinist, can accede to ALL the assertions of the foregoing paragraph ; it is necessary to understand the sense, in which the author takes such expressions, as " absolute freedom of the human will," " moral obligation," " divine justice," " those who deserve punishment," &c. &c. in short, to understand the metaphysical system to which all these refer ; and then it will be found, that his meaning is very different from what ordinary usage would attach to his words. (See a short explanation of his system in Gilbert's life of Williams Appendix B. page 561. Lond. 1825.) But even this method of using the foregoing expressions, shows a growing consciousness, that the common notions and common language of mankind are not far from the truth ; since it evinces a desire to enlist them in its service, and display them on its side. Even this tendency to approximate to right views, should be regarded as favourable to the progress of truth. And, though the illegitimate reasoning cannot, and ought not (for truth's sake) to be yielded to ; yet the improved feeling ought to be met in a conciliating spirit.

Of the state of Calvinism in England, we in this country can only know by books and report : but here it comes under our personal observation ; and it cannot be

ing the *metaphysical defence* of his peculiar opinions, appeals *exclusively* to Scripture. May he not fancy, that some of these are revealed ; and others not ? And is it just or reasonable, to call on him to reject, what he believes to be a *scriptural* doctrine ; because some speculator connects it with a tenet that he disavows ? As long indeed, as he defends his positions, by metaphysical reasoning ; it seems to me perfectly fair, to require of him, to be metaphysically consistent. But when the appeal is to scripture, then scripture alone should decide. The more constantly, honestly, and fearlessly, such an appeal is resorted to ; the more I am convinced, will the feelings and tenets, of candid, humble, and pious christians ; be found approximating, to a *practical* agreement. And, I trust, that nothing shall be found, in the following discourses ; calculated to impede the attainment of so desirable an object.

doubted, that even the *highest* dogmas of Predestination, have advocates as well within as without the Established Church. Regarding therefore the very diversified reception, which these doctrines meet with ; it must be considered as more correct to argue *against opinions* than *against persons*, and that also, only so far, as these very opinions are concerned : and without presuming to deny, that their *practical* tendency, may be greatly, if not totally counteracted, by the reception of other tenets ; however inconsistent may appear the united belief of both.

My chief design indeed, is to show, that in theological investigations, whether of Nature or of Revelation ; *deductions from facts*, are to be preferred to *metaphysical speculations*. But I trust that I have not neglected that still higher purpose ; the furtherance of practical piety, and the inculcation of that “ doctrine which is according to godliness.” ⁴

⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 3. See Appendix vii.

SERMON I.

ROMANS i. 20.

“ For the invisible things of him from the creation of
“ the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things
“ that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.”

THE Apostle here distinctly asserts, that it was within the power of the Heathen, to obtain some conception of the attributes of the Deity ; or in other words, some knowledge of natural Religion, from a due attention to the works of his creation.

But it is not so much my intention, on the present occasion, to illustrate or defend this assertion ; as to adduce this text, as an exemplification of a well known maxim of philosophical reasoning ; and thence to claim the Apostle's sanction, for its general adoption in theological investigations.

The maxim to which I allude, you will immediately perceive to be this; that in all analytical enquiries, we should commence with the things most known, and proceed from thence to others less known; and that we should always consider the conclusions thus obtained, as subject to modification and correction, either from the discovery of new phenomena, or a more complete induction of the old.

Thus, in the case before us; the Apostle proposes the visible creation, in all its wonderful and harmonious variety, as furnishing a number of well known and intelligible facts; from the study of which, we might ascend to the knowledge of the eternal power and Godhead, of its mighty Author.

Again; when a *Revelation* discloses to us, *new* displays of Divine power and wisdom; we must conceive ourselves at liberty, to *correct* our former conclusions; without any impeachment of the system of reasoning previously adopted.

Thus, in each of these systems, Nature and Revelation, this maxim seems to hold good; and our religious knowledge should be improved, by a patient and pious examination, of the *actual exhibitions* of his own attributes, which the Deity has vouchsafed.

A due attention therefore to this maxim, may if I mistake not, conduce to some useful practical results; not by leading to the discovery of any new truths, but by enabling us to compare the relative merits of some former conflicting systems; and so to determine by it, as by a test, which are the more philosophical and conclusive.

I shall therefore endeavour briefly in the present discourse, to make such application, to a few of the inquiries belonging to natural religion.

The first subject to which I would direct your attention, is the comparison of the direct and indirect investigations of the Divine attributes; or as they are sometimes called, the arguments *a priori* and *a posteriori*. These, though not necessarily opposed, yet have been sometimes managed so, as to lead to very conflicting results. The former is generally preferred by metaphysicians, the latter is more agreeable to ordinary understandings.

By the direct method it is pretended, that the human mind from the mere naked consciousness of its own existence, can reason out the being, nature, and attributes of the Deity. That this consciousness leads demonstratively to the admission of *some* creating power

is evident ; but when we proceed to determine, by mere abstract inferences from this *single datum*, the attributes of this power ; without any regard to the *other traces* which he has left of them in the nature of our own minds, in the works of his creation, and in the dealings of his Providence ; we are surely leaving out of consideration, premises, which according to the maxim laid down, ought to be regarded as of the utmost importance. It is not therefore astonishing that this line of argument, though not necessarily fallacious, should have conducted to defective results. Being insufficient, on the one hand to explain the phenomena, of which in its progress it had taken no account ; and on the other to overturn the false systems, built upon the partial consideration of these neglected facts.

Accordingly some of the first deductions from it, have produced disputes, far beyond the range of ordinary minds : and the daring metaphysician, soon launches into the boundless doctrine of Infinites ; where it is imagined that the voyage of intellectual discovery is completed, because the human mind, unaided and alone, has been set adrift on an ocean without bottom, and without shore. Whereas, had observation been extended beyond the *one* fact, and made to embrace the displays of Divine Wisdom in the external world ; the

equally wonderful phenomena of the human mind ; and the actual dealings of providence with the human race : the conclusions arrived at, though less bold and speculative, would have accorded better with practical experience, and the true state of things, as they really exist around and within us. Accordingly we find, that the most successful and satisfactory attempts to supply the defects, or to controvert the errors alluded to ; have always consisted in *appeals to facts*.

It may indeed, be argued ; that sensitive knowledge, is not of equal value with intuitive, as furnishing grounds towards the investigation of the Divine attributes. Though this objection, was for a long time allowed more weight than it deserved ; yet it cannot in any way hold good against the necessity of attending closely to *mental* phenomena. These at least are subjects of consciousness ; and ought to be impartially admitted among the premises adopted in every such inquiry.

Thus it appears, that the most philosophical method of investigating the nature and attributes of the Deity, (independently of Revelation,) is that described by the Apostle in the text. And it is easy to perceive, that as Religion is the business of all mankind ; so this method is far more accessible than the other to

ordinary understandings. Even the simplest peasant can feel with the Psalmist that, “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work;” or with the Apostle, that “he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with joy and gladness.”

Intimately connected with our notions of the Divine attributes, must always be our conclusions concerning the Moral Government of God; and these again must materially influence the practice of all reasonable men. It is this connexion that renders it so important, to exercise extreme caution in our investigations on this subject. As therefore the two most accredited hypotheses in this matter, which have long divided the opinions of the religious, as well as the philosophical world; are undoubtedly the schemes of Irrespective Predestination and its opposite: I shall endeavour in the next place, to apply to them the test before laid down.

It has been already shown, that the legitimate method of obtaining a knowledge of the moral attributes of the Deity; is by examining the traces which he has left of himself, in the moral phenomena *around* us, and *within* us. Hence it appears, that a consideration of

these phenomena, is the *first* step in the inquiry; as they are nearest and best known to us: and the attempt to explain the Divine attributes, is the *last* and most remote. And further, it is to be observed; that this ultimate part of the process, is clouded with all the uncertainty, that hangs about the Doctrine of Infinites.

Hence, it must be admitted; that *all deductions made from the Infinite attributes of the Deity, must be considered as far less certain, than those primarily deduced from actual phenomena.*

Perhaps, I may be permitted to illustrate my meaning by a reference to physical science; and to two systems in which the opposite methods of arguing here compared, have been adopted with proportionably different results. Des Cartes laid it down as a general maxim, that his knowledge of every kind would be most accurate and secure, if he *first* made himself acquainted by *abstract reasoning*, with the nature and attributes of the *great first cause*; concluding that an acquaintance with the cause, would make him acquainted with all its effects.¹ Combining this principle, with a cer-

¹ Des Cartes Principia Philosophiæ. P. i. 24; P. ii. 36; P. iii. 4, 43 to 47.

tain hypothesis concerning motion, he was led to adopt the system of Vortices. Newton, on the contrary, commencing with simple facts, argued upwards, to the noble discoveries that have immortalized his name.

To apply this to the case before us; the Predestinarian scheme, *commences* with the Infinite and Incomprehensible attributes of the Deity as its *premises*; and thence argues downwards by steps apparently plausible, until it terminates in a system of moral government conducted by irrelative, unconditional, eternal decrees, arbitrarily electing some to *everlasting* happiness and others to *everlasting* misery; and preparing them for these states respectively, the one by the uncontrollable influence of a supernatural agency; the other by the equally overpowering impulses of an evil nature, to overcome or reform which, no effectual aid is vouchsafed. Thus leaving no freedom to human agents, no virtue or vice in human actions, and no power to man of influencing his *eternal* destiny. Conclusions, as much at variance with facts of long and daily experience; with all we feel in ourselves, and observe around us; with all the suggestions of conscience, and all the ordinary notions of Justice, Mercy, and Goodness; with the *actual* system by which Providence has hitherto governed the human race, or compelled them to govern

themselves ; as the vortices of Des Cartes, are irreconcilable with the real physical phenomena of nature.

The scheme opposed to this, takes its premises from observations, on what may be called *moral phenomena*. It would be foreign to the purpose of this Discourse, to attempt a full detail of these, or of the reasoning about them. I shall only take such a brief and general view of them, as is calculated to illustrate the position, that this scheme adopts a more philosophical line of argument, in as much as it proceeds according to the maxim already established.

The moral phenomena alluded to are *first*, the powers of mind which man is conscious of possessing : and *secondly*, the moral checks and restraints, with which he finds himself actually surrounded ; whether they be the natural and inherent consequences of virtue and vice, or the artificial ones imposed by human laws.

I. Judging from *observation* it may be asserted ; that man has received, and *feels* he has received from the Author of his existence ; the gifts of reason, conscience, moral affections, &c. and especially a liberty of will to use or abuse these several powers ; and that in consequence of this freedom of choice, he is an accountable being. Nor is this exceeding the true meaning

of the Apostle's assertion, "for when," says he "the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law, written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while, accusing or else excusing one another." ²

Many, indeed, relying on mere abstract arguments, deny Free Will (in the strict meaning of the term,) altogether: and define the mental faculties of man, according to their various fancies. ³ But the existence and nature of

² Rom. ii. 14, 15.

³ I desire here to observe, that in asserting freedom of will, I do not mean to express any thing inconsistent with the letter or spirit of our ninth and tenth, most important and most scriptural articles. See Appendix iii.

I speak here only of the conclusions of natural religion, which can afford us little or no light as to the nature and operations of Divine Grace. Though if I am not mistaken they help to prove its necessity, and to prepare the humble mind, to expect and long for its inestimable assistance. For though it does not belong to my argument, I may be allowed to observe; that the same appeal to experience, that I have made use of in the text, to establish our consciousness of free will; will go also to prove from the convictions of reflecting men; that however free in ordinary matters,—both to will and execute; yet in spiritual things, though equally free to understand, approve, and in a certain sense prefer what is right;—that

our moral and rational powers ; is and ought to be in true philosophy, the subject of mental observation, not the sport of hypothesis. And it would be as absurd to submit the character, or reality of these phenomena, to the decisions

we have neither taste, or ability, to love it, and steadily follow after it ; except these be given us from above.

The only competent judges in such a question, are those who have made it the subject of mental observation, exertion, and pursuit : or in other words, those who have sought after righteousness, under whatever dispensation. (Acts x. 35. Rom. ii. 7, 10.) And surely the confessions, the prayers, the repentance, the sacrifices, of the humble and pious of all ages ; show, that they felt ; not only that they were themselves to blame for their actions, and therefore that they *might have done otherwise* ; (that is they had a free will ;) but that to make this will operative in *spiritual* matters ; they required an aid, beyond the reach of mere human attainment. Some may fancy this statement inconsistent in itself. And I allow that it cannot satisfy, the mere *speculative* supporters, either of Free Will, or its opponents. But to me it seems the testimony of conscience and experience, which (in natural religion) must as I conceive be preferred to abstract hypothesis. The mere theorist whichever side he adopts, endeavours to build up a scheme perfect in itself ; and too often closes his eyes on the facts that oppose it, or mis-represents them to suit his theory. But it is the business of sound philosophy, to frame its system to facts, and not to mould its facts to the pre-determined shape of its system. Now it is too generally overlooked in this controversy, that the inquiry is not how the mind may be, but how it is actually constituted. This surely is a question of fact, not of conjecture ; and must therefore be decided by an appeal to common sense and experience, not by random speculation.

of the speculator or dogmatist; as to subject the laws of the solar system, to the vortices of Des Cartes; or to suppose the motion of the Earth amenable, to the decrees of a fancied infallibility.

Those who love metaphysical abstractions, may people the worlds of their imagination, with beings of whatsoever character they prefer; but the nature and capabilities of man as he *really is*, must be determined, not by speculation, but experience.

It is true, that this experience, is the object of consciousness, not of the senses: and accordingly, each man is, in some respect, the judge in his own case; and may if he chooses, deny his own freedom, and his power of self-control. But in truth, this is seldom done in ordinary life, except by those abandoned individuals who seek in such a statement, an excuse, for capricious or unprincipled conduct. An excuse, which is never admitted by the majority of reasoning persons, much less by the truly pious. These latter indeed, will always be found attributing any thing *good* they achieve, to the co-operating efficacy of superior assistance. But they will with equal sincerity, blame themselves for what they have done amiss; or in other words acknowledge that they should and *might have willed and acted otherwise*: and this is exactly

the practical question, the very turning point, on which the whole controversy hinges.

Again, even those, who in theory contend for the doctrine of necessity; yet in all the affairs of life, where their interests, comforts, or gratifications are concerned; both speak, and act, as if they disbelieved it; and as if they really imagined themselves, capable of such *self-determination* and *self-control*; as to improve their talents, their opportunities, and their acquirements; and so to exercise a material influence on their worldly fortunes.

But suppose the assertions of individuals, as to their consciousness in this particular, to disagree. It is then evident, that the question being as to the *nature of man in general*, must be determined by the voice of preponderating testimony. But how, it may be asked, are the suffrages to be collected? Since the judgment of each individual, must in this scheme be considered as a separate fact; how is a sufficiently extensive induction to be made?

In answer; it may safely be asserted, that in every civilized nation, the induction has been already made; the suffrages have been taken; the case has been tried, and the decision is on record. And the verdict is the most impartial that can be looked for in such a case;

because given without any reference to the controversy in dispute. All human laws, forbidding, condemning, and punishing vicious actions ; are grounded on the acknowledged supposition, that man is possessed of a *self-control*, a *self-determining power*, by which he could both in *will and in deed*, have avoided the very actions for which he is condemned, and in the very circumstances in which he has committed them. Nor would it be easy to find a case, where the criminal has deceived himself, or hoped to deceive his judges ; by pleading that he laboured under a fatal necessity, which rendered his crimes unavoidable, and therefore excusable. The justice of all legislative enactments, evidently and essentially depends on the principle, that the things prohibited can be avoided ; or in other words *might have been done otherwise than they were done* : and this, as I have already observed, is the very turning point of the controversy. Accordingly, in whatever instances, such freedom of will is not pre-supposed, (as in the cases of idiots and madmen,) the operation of such enactments is suspended.

All nations therefore, who consent to frame and abide by such laws ; do thereby testify their deliberate and solemn assent, to the truth of this principle ; and consequently to the existence of free will in man ; and do certify the sincerity

of their conviction, by staking thereon, their properties, their liberties, and their lives.

Numberless other instances might be adduced wherein the practice of mankind implies their belief in this principle. And so conscious of this are the opponents of Free Will, that they generally deprecate appeals to common sense and experience ; and resort to metaphysical arguments, to examine, what is in truth a matter of fact, not of conjecture ; or in other words, to determine, not what man *is*, but what they imagine he *must be*. In their reasonings, they differ, as might have been expected, as much from each other, as they do from truth and reality. Indeed it is of little consequence, what hypothesis they adopt ; since the sincere inquirer after *real* knowledge, must feel convinced, that true philosophy consists in drawing our premises from experience, and not from the reveries of speculation.

But the experience of common sense and conscience, will always decide ; that no man can *conscientiously* make this excuse for his crimes, that he *could not have willed or acted otherwise than he did*. ⁴

⁴ Whether any man, all the circumstances of the case, and all his dispositions being supposed the same ; *could have willed and acted differently from what he has done* : is a practical

The existence of the above faculties in the human mind once acknowledged leads, by necessary inference, to the admission; that there exists in the Great first Cause a *power to create* them. Not indeed that these faculties *themselves*

question; and must be answered by each man's conscience. He that puts it to himself, or to another, does in fact, institute an experiment on the phenomena of mind; and the answer of each man is *his* decision in *his own case*, as to his consciousness of possessing a free will, or *self-directing, self-controlling, self-determining power*. Therefore I say; that the general answer of mankind to *this question*, is by the laws of induction the true experimental decision, as to a matter of fact, which involves the whole controversy. That the determination of this practical question, must be regarded of the importance that I attach to it; may be proved from the language of Necessitarians themselves, *whatever system* they adopt. I give but one extract here; for others, see Appendix. "I will even grant," says Dr. Priestly, "moral and physical causes to be as different, in their nature and operation, as Dr. Price himself can possibly suppose them to be; but if they be really *causes* producing *certain effects*, that is, if we be so constituted, as that one definite determination, shall always follow a definite state of mind, it must be true, that without a miracle, no *volition* or *action*, could have been otherwise than it *has been, is, or is to be*; and this is all that, as a necessitarian, I contend for." (Free Discussion between Dr. Price and Dr. Priestly, London, 1778, p. 385.)

It is not my business to analyse this hypothetical reasoning. I only adduce it for sake of the conclusion which will be found *practically* the same in all the dif-

exist in him in the same manner as in us, but the power of originating and producing them, in all possible variety. For as well might we attribute to him materiality, or loco-motion, or actual seeing and hearing, because they evi-

ferent schemes of fatalism, abstract Predestination, physical or moral necessity ; however different may be the premises used, or however it may be attempted to disguise the result by the equivocal use of ordinary language. This conclusion may be thus stated : *that supposing his dispositions and the circumstances of the case unchanged, no man could have willed or acted otherwise than he has done, does, or shall do.* This, I say, is exactly the *practical* question, to which the whole controversy is finally reducible. And it should be remembered, that it is always sought to establish this conclusion, by *a priori* arguments, such as those of the passage just quoted : whereas it is evidently a question of fact, that must be determined by an appeal to the phenomena of mind, or the testimony of consciousness. An appeal, in which the enactment of human laws with their respective sanctions, and also the universal language of repentance and prayer, are (as has been observed in the text,) so decisive. For how, consistently with common sense and justice, could men think of punishing others, or of blaming themselves, for willing, or doing that which they could not have possibly avoided ? So forcibly indeed, did Priestly feel this to be the case, that although no way deficient in boldness of assertion, or ingenuity in perverting ordinary language to disguise and recommend his theory ; yet he is here forced to give up all attempts at evasion, and to make acknowledgments the most revolting to a reflecting and religious mind.

dently belong to our own nature ; as ascribe to him in any but “ an analogical or metaphorical sense,” loving, hating, thinking, willing, reasoning or knowing.

“ It is acknowledged,” says he, “ that a Necessitarian, who, as such, believes, that strictly speaking, *nothing goes wrong*, but that every thing is under the best direction possible, himself, and his conduct as part of an immense and perfect whole, included, *cannot accuse himself of having done wrong*, (in the ultimate sense of the word ;) he has therefore, in this strict sense *nothing to do with repentance, confession, or pardon ; which are all adapted to a different, imperfect, and fallacious view of things !!!*” Ibid. p. 301.

The great danger to man, of moral debasement, is according to him, a new species of *Idolatry*, which he has discovered to consist in “ idolizing ourselves and the world ; “ considering other things,” (beside God) “ as *proper agents and causes*, whereas strictly speaking, there is “ but *one cause*, but *one sole agent* in universal nature.” (306.) Consequently he represents the climax of virtue to be that state of mind, “ where having *less to reflect upon ourselves*, for ; the *sentiment of reproach shall naturally and easily vanish* and we shall then fully concur “ and rejoice in the belief that in ALL THINGS we are, “ and have been, *fellow workers together with God ; and that he works all his works in us, by us, and for us.*”(305.)

He laments that few can realize this *sublime* view of things ; for that “ such are the influences to which all “ mankind without distinction are exposed, that they necessarily refer actions first of all to themselves and others ; “ it is a long time before they begin to consider themselves

We can indeed conclude, that having created all these in us, his nature must be so perfect, that we cannot attribute to him any line of conduct, inconsistent with whatever is *excellent* in the exercise of these faculties in our-

“ and others as *instruments* in the hands of a superior agent.
 “ Consequently the associations which refer actions to themselves, get so confirmed, that they are never entirely obliterated ; and therefore the common language, and the common feelings of mankind, will be adapted to the first, the limited and imperfect, or rather erroneous view of things.” (298.) Nothing more need be desired to confute him, than this, his own confession ; for it proves that man is *actually so constituted*, that he neither *feels* nor *believes* himself to be a necessitated agent, or one that *could not have willed or acted otherwise than he has done*. This is precisely the *matter of fact* in dispute, and which must be determined by the voice of conscience, the only admissible witness in such a case. And it is evident, that so far as *his* testimony deserves credit, the verdict of mankind is against him.

The same reasoning applies against *every* system that leads to the same conclusion, viz., that *man cannot will or act otherwise than he does*. It must be equally opposed to the testimony of consciousness, no matter how the conclusion has been obtained : and would, if believed, equally remove the feelings of remorse for sin ; which are essential to all religion. With such notions, man might lament the infirmities, or corruptions of his nature ; but knowing, that he was not his own creator ; he could not blame himself, for the one or the other. And misled by such unprofitable speculations, to imagine that he had no self-controlling, self-restraining, self-determining power :

selves. And therefore we cannot ascribe to him as his special act, any thing we should perceive to be unworthy of *any* just or merciful, *any* wise or upright being. But this furnishes no clue whatever, to a knowledge of the *real constitution* of his nature, or of the manner in which his divine attributes exist together.

In truth, we no more comprehend how he wills, than how he acts ; and therefore we have no better right to assert that he wills evil, than that he does evil. Again, we as little understand how he knows, as how he sees ; and therefore might as well argue that all things exist in consequence of his beholding them, as that all events arrive in consequence of his fore-knowing them.

In short, all that can be inferred by reason, concerning the *intrinsic nature*, of the invisible unsearchable Deity, must be admitted by the candid inquirer, to be no better than conjecture. And he, who should hope from such doubtful support, as his fancied insight into the

“ the sentiment of reproach, would easily and naturally “ vanish.” (Ib. p. 305.) And he would gradually become more and more content with his actions and his passions however wrong ; unless conscience should re-assert her authority, rebel against his false creed, and force him to *act in opposition to his hypothesis*.

unknown operations of the Divine mind, to suspend a system of irrespective decrees, embracing the moral government of the world; would but too much resemble him, who should imagine the material globe adequately sustained, if upheld by a chain, whose highest links were wrapped in clouds and darkness.

Thus our *affirmative* knowledge of the Deity, as derived from this part of our inquiry, consists in the certainty, (though his nature is unknown to us,) that he is the *Creative* source of all that is great, glorious, and good in heaven or in earth. While we may *negatively* conclude, that his moral government shall on the whole be conducted, in a manner not inconsistent with whatever is excellent in the exercise of power and wisdom, justice and mercy, goodness and truth.

Nor is it a little important, as connected with the present inquiry, to keep in mind this distinction, between our *affirmative* and *negative* knowledge in this matter. For it shows us, that as on the one side, we cannot pretend to such an insight into the nature and character of the Divine knowledge, as to deduce therefrom a system of eternal and irrespective decrees: so, neither on the other, can this system of moral government be ascribed to the Deity, because it would be manifestly unworthy, not merely

of Him who has created all moral excellence, but of *any* of those beings, on whom he has conferred the most ordinary degrees of mercy and justice.

II. Under the second head of our inquiry into facts, may be reckoned, the natural benefits or evils arising out of moral or immoral practices. For they are in fact, so many rewards or punishments, exhibiting the Being who has so constituted our nature, as a Moral Governor. This part of his government may not be so clearly discernible in individual instances; because much of the happiness and unhappiness attending virtue and vice, is mental and invisible. In the case of nations however, considered merely as bodies politic, the *internal* sanction of an approving or reproaching conscience, of subdued or distracting passions, can have no existence; and therefore the *external* sanctions are more uniformly enforced. Hence whoever carefully examines the dealings of providence with the human race; will admit that national prosperity has ever kept pace, with national wisdom and integrity. Whereas the greatest empires, when once corrupted, have soon become the prey of internal strife or foreign domination.

Again; man is made for society, and cannot exist without it. Consequently all the regulations, which are *really* conducive to the main-

tenance of civil policy and social order, must be regarded as evident consequences of our nature, when enlightened to the rational pursuit of its own advantage; and therefore should be considered as intimations of a moral government, carried on through their intervention.

In addition to which, it ought to be observed, that these laws may be regarded in another point of view, as a most important class of moral phenomena: in as much as they virtually exhibit the most unexceptional declarations of reason on this subject. Because they are collected from the common consent of mankind, and therefore rendered, in a great measure, independant of the obliquities of individual intellect, the errors of private judgment, and the partial views of self-interest, prejudice, or passion.

But all the laws of civilized nations, both in their enactment and administration, not only presuppose, (as has been already remarked,) certain notions concerning the freedom and accountableness of man, the merit and demerit of human actions, and the inseparable connexion of virtue and vice with rewards and punishments; but greatly contribute to *fix* and *perpetuate* these notions. It is therefore evidently the intention, of that part of the moral government with which we are acquainted, to

impress these principles deeply on the human mind, and to induce the human race to *regulate their conduct* accordingly.

The laws, then, of this moral government under which we find ourselves placed, and from which we cannot escape; correspond with, and corroborate the conclusions deduced under the former head, from the observation of mental phenomena. And from both we conclude that similar principles of Government will be adopted (so far at least as man is concerned) in other worlds and in future ages; only more developed and therefore more evidently free from its present apparent imperfections. Upon this account we look in another life, for some such general disclosure and consummation of the ways and wisdom of providence; as shall vindicate, even in the minor details, the grand principles upon which, *generally* speaking, his government at present is obviously conducted. How this may be done, with many questions connected therewith; reason without revelation, could as I conceive, do little more, than form plausible conjectures. Though now that it has pleased God in Christ to bring "life and immortality to light through the Gospel;" ⁴ it is possible for reason to estimate the beauty, and

⁴ 2 Tim. i. 10.

the mercy, and the wisdom of the dispensation, by which it has been effected.

Thus, if I mistake not, the Predestinarian scheme and its opposite, have been fairly though very briefly contrasted ; and it has been shown that their *general* results (for details could not be attended to) are not more opposed, than the systems of reasoning by which they are obtained. In as much as the latter commencing, as it ought, with those moral phenomena which lie within general observation, deduces from them by natural and easy reasoning, a system of Divine Government, which is alike compatible, with the present exercise of a moral free agency by man, and with the final award of a just, impartial, and righteous judgment by his sovereign ruler.

Whereas, the Predestinarian scheme commencing at the other end, where it ought to terminate ; assuming as clear and undoubted premises, what ought to be regarded as but obscure and conjectural conclusions ; beginning with the attributes of the Deity, which are abstract deductions, not experimental truths ; it argues downwards, until it arrives at a theory of moral government, contrary to the common sense, and a statement of moral phenomena, contrary to the common observation of mankind. If the maxim laid down in the com-

mencement of this discourse, be considered applicable to these subjects; there can be no difficulty in perceiving, which of these two systems, is the more legitimate and philosophical.

Allow me to add a few practical deductions, from what has been stated.

First, the method here insisted on, would put an end to many questions, that have hitherto perplexed the theologian. It is the proceeding opposed to this, which pretending to scan the nature of the great first Cause, without any regard to his works; and investing him with attributes precisely defined, though admitted to be infinite;—attributes which though they mock the grasp of human intellect, are presumptuously doomed, to wear the fetters of pretended demonstration;—it is this method of arguing, which thus removing what we fancy we know of the Deity, to an immeasurable distance from what we really know of nature, and of ourselves; leaves the gulph between, to be filled with a chaos of doubts, difficulties and disputes.

Whereas the legitimate method of reasoning, would introduce nothing into our notions of the Deity, irreconcilable with the *general* character of his works; and by leaving undefined

what could not be explained, would merge many *apparent* contradictions, into simple confessions of ignorance.

Thus our pretensions might be diminished, but our real acquisitions would be rendered more secure : metaphysical subtleties,—stripped of their false and artificial glare,—might relapse into their native obscurity ; but practical knowledge would enjoy a less dubious lustre : the circle of darkness that must limit our utmost inquiries, might seem to contract on us ; but the light within, would be more concentrated, and its corresponding boundary better defined.

Another practical advantage would be ; that this method would make the mind more acquainted with its own ignorance, and therefore more likely to receive a properly attested revelation, with modesty and humility. Accustomed to feel, that it can never fathom the deep things of God, by the mere efforts of our present intellect ; it would be inclined to look into the pages of inspiration, less for abstract disquisitions, than for moral precepts and authoritative doctrines. Neither would a mind, thus trained to observe difficulties in the lowest department of nature, and within the range of our senses ; fancy that none should present themselves in the higher regions of Revelation, and nearer the throne of the invisible and in-

comprehensible God. Consequently, it would not, either with the Infidel, reject all things revealed, because some were obscure; nor with the Deist, subtract from a revelation its very essence, by levelling its sublimest mysteries to the standard of a finite capacity.

Again; he who imagines, that he can by mere speculative reasoning, search out the Almighty to perfection, can have but little cheering expectation, of more enlarged views in a future existence. It seems evident that a finite being, however exalted, can never hope by mere abstract investigation, to discover those "secret things that belong unto the Lord." ⁵ But he, who abides by facts, *may* expect to learn more and more, of what it is *intended* he should know; from every hitherto unseen portion of creation or of the divine economy, which may hereafter be unveiled to his wondering sight. For example; how many questions, as to the freedom of intellectual agents, and the conditionality of the Divine decrees, might be set at rest; by our learning from the glorious spirits who witnessed the event itself, the true history of the fall of those "angels" which kept not their first estate, but left their "own habitation, and are reserved in everlasting

⁵ Deut. xxix. 29.

“ chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of
 “ the great day.” ⁶

The humble observer therefore of God’s wonders of creation, and his still greater wonders of Moral Government, whereby he ruleth “ the unruly wills and affections of sinful men,” making “ all things work together for good to “ those that love him ;” ⁷ will surely (with more ardour than the conqueror of old longed for another world to subdue) desire to explore other scenes and other systems : to mark how he upholdeth the planets in their spheres, and sendeth forth the sun, rejoicing as a giant to run his course ; and above all, how he governs myriads of free and intelligent beings, in holiness happiness and goodness ; making his “ angels “ spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire,” ⁸ and doing his supreme pleasure, “ in heaven as well “ as in the earth, and in the sea, and in all deep “ places.” ⁹

Lastly, abstract investigations can have but little influence on the heart or affections: whereas the individual accustomed to trace the Creator in all his works, carries with him the sense of that ever present Deity, “ in whom we live “ and move, and have our being.” ¹ To *him* the

⁶ Jude 6. ⁷ Rom. viii. 28. ⁸ Ps. civ. 4. Heb. i. 7.

⁹ Ps. cxxxv. 6. ¹ Acts xvii. 28.

simplest work in creation, shows marks of its author; and every leaf and flower bears the impress of Divinity: *he* can hear an instructive voice in every breeze, in every echo, every ever murmuring stream; when the “sea makes “a noise,” and “the floods clap their hands,” and “the hills are joyful together before the “Lord:”² *he* can recognize the chiding of the Lord, and the blasting breath of his displeasure, when “he thunders out of Heaven,” and “sends forth his arrows and casts forth “his lightnings,” “when the springs of waters “are seen, and the foundations of the round “world are discovered.”³ To *his* gladdened heart, it is like “the “brightness of the Lord’s presence,” and “the “lifting up the light of his countenance,”⁴ when “he decketh “himself with light as with a garment, and “spreadeth out the heavens as a curtain.”⁵ And *his* eye can discern the majestic progress of Deity, when “he maketh the clouds his “chariot, and walketh on the wings of the wind.”⁶ So true and so practical is the statement in my text, that, “the invisible “things of Him, from the creation of the “world are clearly seen, being understood by “the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.”

² Ps. xcvi. 7, 8. ³ Ps. xviii. 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15.

xxix. 3. lxxvii. 16, 17, 18, 19. xcvi. 3, 4, 5,

⁴ Ps. iv. 6. ⁵ Ps. civ. 2, 3.

APPENDIX I.

*Some further applications, of the general principle
laid down in the preceding Discourse.*

I. The propriety of arguing, from things more known to those that are less so; is so evident, and so well established, as to be universally admitted in the abstract. But the aspirings of metaphysical pretensions, cannot brook this reasonable restriction. The application of this maxim to such controversies, has such a sad tendency to cramp the wings of speculation; and in place of visionary flights, to substitute the lowly walk of sober inquiry: such a tendency in short, to show us how little we know, or can know; how much we are, and must be ignorant of: that none but a mind sincerely attached to Truth, and firmly resolved on the pursuit of practical and attainable knowledge, will submit to its humiliating restraints.

Nor are even the practical advocates of liberty, entirely exempt from error, in this respect. There is however, this material difference, between the Necessitarians and them: that these set out from legitimate premises, and to a certain point proceed philosophically. It is only when they attempt to pass, the impassible boundary, between finite and infinite; when they pretend to

understand the hidden nature of the Deity ; when they fancy they have compassed Immensity, and travelled back through Eternity ; when they would apply to Divine foreknowledge, the standard of human intellect, and portion out its boundless abyss, into feet and inches : it is then, that they grow dizzy with speculation, and quitting the firm footing of practical inquiry, they lose the knowledge they might have held fast, in a desperate plunge after shadows, into the gulph of Infinities.

Were practical inquirers to arrest their progress, when they find facts and common sense begin to fail them ; their attainments would be, not only more satisfactory, but more secure. But this confession of ignorance, and of inability to advance, contrasted with the lofty pretensions of their opponents ; is too humiliating, to be expected from the generality of disputants. Nevertheless, until the lovers of truth, consent to assign these philosophical limitations, to human research ; they will be ever exposed to perplexity and disappointment : their most boasted discoveries, will ever prove the most untenable and unintelligible, and their paradoxes increasing in obscurity as they mount higher, instead of reflecting lustre will cast a shadow on the humble truths below.

But faulty as is this proceeding, that of their adversaries, is much more objectionable ; in as much, as it not only terminates, but *commences* with speculation ; and then proceeds with all the assumption of logical accuracy ; from arbitrary definitions, to still more arbitrary conclusions.

True it is, that in some instances, (a few of which

shall be examined hereafter,) they quote facts in support of their system. But this is very different, from making them, (as they ought to be) its exclusive foundation. For in the multiplied appearances of nature, and ever varying phases of the human mind, there is scarcely any system, however anomalous, to countenance which, *some* facts may not be adduced. But in *hypothetical* schemes, investigation will generally prove, that such coincidences, if not merely apparent, are at best but *partial* and inconclusive.

II. Nothing, I conceive, would be more useful, than to make a rigid application of the test already mentioned, to the various systems of Predestination, and Necessity. This however, would lead me far beyond the bounds, prescribed by the nature of this publication. I shall therefore confine myself, to some points, more particularly connected with the statements advanced, in the preceding Discourse.

It has been already observed, that the attributes of the Deity, are supposed discoverable in either of two ways; *a priori*, or *a posteriori*. If the method *a posteriori* be adopted, it has I think already been sufficiently shown; that the premises must include, mental, as well as physical phenomena. Hence, one of the first questions for investigation, is the nature of man's moral powers; among which, the most important, is whether he be a free agent, or not.

It is therefore evident that this is a primary not an ultimate question; one of fact not of speculation, one that must be decided by an appeal to experience, not by abstract argument. If then, the decision of man-

kind, be in favour of moral free agency, this decision must be admitted among the postulates : and no subsequent deductions, whether immediately from these data themselves, or remotely from the Divine attributes, as deduced therefrom ; can be admitted to overturn, one of these original premises.

Suppose the argument *a priori* to be preferred. In this case the only datum relied on, is the consciousness of our own existence. And this is proved from the consciousness of some mental operation. But it is evident, that willing is just as much a subject of consciousness, as thinking, or any other phenomenon of mind. Or in other words, it is as capable of being made, the subject of separate examination, and independant knowledge ; as any other faculty. Clearly then, we are not warranted in arguing from the admission of any other faculty, to the denial or limitation of this, that is equally well known to us : whether the inference be direct, in which case its absurdity would be manifest ; or circuitous, in which the fallacy is introduced, in a less palpalbe shape. But this obvious violation of the maxim laid down, is evident in the reasonings of those ; who making use of the consciousness of one mental operation, to establish *a priori* the existence of God ; double back again on us, with an inference from the Divine attributes, to the denial or restriction of another, viz. that of willing ; whose real and true properties, are (as well as the former) ascertainable by experience. And here it is easily perceived, that the fallacy is introduced, in the application of the doctrine of infinites, to the Divine attributes. For in truth, all our statements concerning infinity, can amount to little more than negative propositions : and our ignorance about

it is so great, that there can be no more palpable inversion, of the maxim laid down, no more rash and reckless example, of arguing from our mistakes about things less known, to absurd speculations about things that might be known; than the process, of making deductions, from the incomprehensible attributes of the unsearchable God; under pretence of informing us, concerning matters within the reach, of the common sense, and consciousness of all mankind.¹

¹ The inextricable labyrinth, in which those involve themselves, who pretend to penetrate the Divine nature, and unfold the Divine decrees; might be illustrated by many quotations, from authors, who on that subject, have equally perplexed themselves, and their disciples. But I shall not trespass on my readers, by more than one.

The supralapsarian Dr. Twisse, in reasoning against the Sublapsarian doctrine, (which assumed the merit, of *not* making sin a consequence of decrees,) uses the following argument. “It seems impossible by any solid reason, to explain from these premises, how God may not be constituted the author of sin. Let it be granted that the fall of our first parents, is removed from the decree of Predestination. If in the mean time, it must only be subjected to a divine decree of another kind, what advantage do we ultimately gain, from this our anxious desire, to avoid that rock? We have in reality not avoided it; but while we have with sufficient solicitude wished, by one course to shun this rock, we have on steering another, unhappily struck upon it. If this had been the order of things in the Divine intention; that the first place should be occupied by the creation; the second by the permission of the fall; and the third by

III. Again, the Predestinarian scheme, is guilty of more than one violation, of the maxim laid down in the text. For, it not only commences with the attributes of the Deity, in place of moral phenomena, to determine his moral government; but among these, it selects for its basis, the *prescience* of God; of which it has been just-

“ Predestination to life and death: then it would have
 “ been necessary, that in the act of execution, the order
 “ of all of them should be reversed: the consequences of
 “ which would be, that God ought *first* to have saved some
 “ men and damned others, he ought *afterwards* to have
 “ permitted their fall, and, *last of all*, he ought to have
 “ produced them from nothing by means of creation. Such
 “ are the monstrous and portentous opinions with which
 “ this (sublapsarian scheme) is charged; and which it
 “ produces—opinions that are far more worthy, proceed
 “ from the Schools of the Jesuits or Arminians; than from
 “ ours! ”

“ To understand ” (says Mr. Nichols) “ the logic contained in the close of this quotation, it is necessary to state, that one grand argument, on which as a foundation the Doctor’s scheme rests, and which he considers to be his best weapon of defence, is this fallacious postulate; “ *whatever is first in the Divine intention must be last in execution!!!* His own curious reasons for adopting it, are too diffuse to be here transcribed; they may be seen in his preface. Though the Calvinists generally knit their brows, and thunder out *anathemas* against any man, who is so presumptuous, as to pry into the Divine counsels; yet in every Predestinarian controversy which I have examined, the fatalists have in this respect been themselves the first offenders; and their adversaries have been compelled either to follow them through all their labyrinths, or to

ly remarked, that it is the most difficult to comprehend, of all the attributes. That it is so, is evident from the different manner, in which we feel concerning any thing past or present, and any thing *supposed* future, however certain, the nature and arrival of the latter, may appear. No one imagines, that the conviction on his mind, that

“ sit down in bitterness of soul, and hear the saving pur-
 “ poses and the glorious attributes of the Divine being tra-
 “ duced.

“ In this instance, the Doctor and his sublapsarian friends
 “ have introduced a preposterous scheme, for the *operation*
 “ *of the Divine volitions*, for which they do not pretend to
 “ produce any scriptural authority, but which ought, ac-
 “ cording to their ideas, to be as implicitly believed as if
 “ it were a part of Divine Revelation. It assumes, that
 “ *before any thought of the creation of mankind entered into,*
 “ *the Divine intention, the damnation of some men, and the sal-*
 “ *vation of others were decreed.* But, as their invention,
 “ when completed, would not work, (because it did not
 “ account for the *mode in which God actually executes what-*
 “ *ever he has previously purposed,*) the preceding most ab-
 “ surd postulate was their next device, to set the first in
 “ motion. And it was by this very postulate, that the
 “ venerable Doctor endeavoured to make the sublapsarian
 “ look ridiculous. That great man Doctor Thomas Pierce,
 “ when adverting to this sophism, says, “ they apply it so
 “ as to infer, that because eternal punishment is last in ex-
 “ ecution, (after sin,) it was first in God’s intention,
 “ (before sin.) And by the same logic, he that first
 “ intends to take ship at Dover, and afterwards sail into
 “ France; must needs sail into France first, and after that
 “ take ship at Dover. Had I used that axiom, in such an
 “ *ignorant manner*, when I was a raw sophister; I had been
 “ hissed out of the schools. And how extremely weak is

the sun shall rise to-morrow, or that any one he knows shall die; is of the *same kind*, as his knowledge of its having actually risen, when he beheld it rise on any particular occasion, or of the death of any individual, whom he saw expire. The one is absolute experience, derived from the senses; the other is a mere calculation of the mind, founded on that experience. The one is know-

“ that cause, which could betray, so strong a disputant as “ Dr. Twisse, into so strange an inconvenience?” (Nichols translation of Arminius’ Works, vol. I. p. 586. Note. Lond. 1825.

Dogmas, such as those advanced above by Dr. T. it might be supposed, would be confined exclusively, to theological speculations. But it is curious to observe, how they will sometimes obtrude themselves, into the practical views of their advocates; and that in such a way, as to give an air of extravagance to their reasonings, of which, though manifest to others, they seem to be totally unconscious. The historian of Queen Anne, Edinburgh Encyclopædia (quoted by Dugald Stewart “ Active and Moral powers.” Ed. 1828. vol. II. 514.) reasons thus, “ while the King, (James II.) was “ involved in the deepest distress, in consequence of the desertion of his army, and the success of the Prince of “ Orange, he was doomed to suffer from the conduct of “ his daughter, the Princess Anne, (married to Prince “ George of Denmark,) a species of distress still more “ severe. If Heaven, in this world, ever interposes its “ avenging arm between guilt and happiness, may we not “ consider the loss of seventeen children, as the penalty “ which it exacted from the mother, who had broken the “ heart of the most indulgent father; and as if this exaction “ had not been sufficiently severe, *the inflection of the punishment PRECEDED the commission of the crime.*”

ledge, the other is only belief. From any thing therefore, that we *find in ourselves*, we cannot understand, in *what way* there can exist in the Divine mind, the *same kind* of knowledge of future events, that there does of the past. It is to the blessed pages of Revelation, and to the fulfilment of prophecy, that we can alone look, for satisfactory statements on this topic.

In the immense and varied creation around us, we can indeed discover, such vast and abundant proofs, of both unbounded wisdom and power; that we cannot doubt, that by their *combined* exertion, he can and will accomplish all his pleasure. But still, this does not establish absolute foreknowledge, considered as a *separate* attribute.

We can indeed *conjecture*, that the Creator, perfectly acquainted with all his works, and therefore with their several tendencies however remote, can, as it were with a glance, discover all their certain consequences, where matter, or *necessitated* agents alone are concerned; and also where *free* agents are in question, that he can foresee all their *possible* results: that is all the possible ramifications, which may grow out of any event, or out of any of its possible consequences. Yet this is not foreknowing, but forecalculating; and falls short of that perfection, we look for in the Deity. For still it may be supposed possible, to precalculate all these conceivable consequences; and yet not foresee with certainty, which of them a *free* agent may adopt. And hence it is, that the most moderate Predestinarians, bewildered in such vain speculations; contend for man's being at least so far a *necessary* agent, as to afford a *ground*

for foreknowledge in the Deity.² Forgetting that thus in their zeal to establish his foreknowledge, they do most unnecessarily, and presumptuously, limit his omnipotence ; by seeking to force on us the conclusion, that there can be no such thing as a free agent ; or in other words, that it is *impossible* for him to create one !!

In like manner, we can also conjecture, how the Deity could select, any *one* of these possible ramifications of events ; and adopt measures, to ensure its arrival. But this again, would not be foreknowing, but predetermining. And accordingly, some of these speculators, have made God's foreknowledge, to depend on his eternal decrees.³ Forgetting, that this is in truth, to deprive him

² " They do indeed," (says a recent advocate of modern Calvinism) " assert, that the foreknowledge of future events " evinces that there must be some *ground* on which rests " the certainty of futurity." (Gilbert's Memoir of Dr. Williams, Lond. 1825. p. 567.)

³ Thus Calvin himself, " but since he foresees future events " only *in consequence of his decree*, that they shall happen ; " it is useless to contend about foreknowledge, while it is " evident that all things come to pass rather by *ordination* " and *decree*." (Inst. Allen's Trans. vol II. 423 Edin. 1813. book iii. c. xxiii. S. 6.) And in the next section while vindicating the " awful decrees " " If any one here attacks God's foreknowledge, he rashly and inconsiderately stumbles. For what ground of accusation is there against the " heavenly Judge, for not being ignorant of futurity ? If " there is any just or plausible complaint, it lies against " *predestination*. Nor should it be thought absurd to affirm " that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and

altogether of foreknowledge, considered as an intrinsic inherent excellence of his glorious nature. For, on this supposition, prescience is not an attribute; but merely the consequence of an act or preference of the Deity. But it is useless to follow up any further these idle reveries. All that I mean in this place to infer, is, that when in natural religion, we venture to speak of the Deity; it is not only vain and presumptuous, but high-

“ the ruin of his posterity in him, but also arranged all by
 “ the *determination of his will.*”

His reason for thus making the divine decrees the *foundation* of his system, seems to be, that he can find in their *inscrutable* nature, a short answer to all objectors; and where any difficulty is proposed, cut the knot at once, by telling them, that they must be silent about that, of which they are totally ignorant. Thus, a little before the passage quoted above, he says of God's will, which with him, is synonymous to his determination or his decree; “ I confess, indeed, that all the descendants of Adam, fell
 “ by the *Divine will* into that miserable condition, in which
 “ they are now involved; and this is what I asserted
 “ from the beginning, that we must always return at last to
 “ the *sovereign determination of God's will, the cause of which*
 “ *is hidden in himself.*” (Ibid p. 429.) “ But of his *will*
 “ it belongs not to us to demand the *reason*, which we are
 “ *incapable of comprehending*, nor is it reasonable that the
 “ Divine will, should be made the subject of controversy
 “ with us, which, whenever it is discussed, is only another
 “ name for the highest rule of justice. Who are you, miserable mortals, preferring an accusation against God,
 “ because he accommodates not the greatness of his works
 “ to your ignorance? as though they were necessarily
 “ wrong because they are concealed from carnal view.

ly unphilosophical, to pretend to argue *a priori* of his nature, and especially of his foreknowledge, as if we could be supposed to know him, as he *really is*. Indeed we may well believe, that it would be presumptuous in the highest orders of created intelligences, so to speak ; “ for who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who “ hath been his counsellor.”² All that *we* can speak of, (exclusive of Revelation) is of those notions, that

“ Of the immensity of God’s judgments you have the clearest evidences. You know they are called “ a great deep.” “ *Now examine your contracted intellects, whether they can “ comprehend God’s secret decrees.* What advantage or satisfaction do you gain from plunging yourselves, by your “ mad researches, into an abyss that reason itself pronounces will be fatal to you? If your mind is disturbed, “ embrace without reluctance the advice of Augustine, “ You a man, expect an answer from me, who am also a “ man. Let us, therefore, both hear him, who says, O “ man, who art thou? Faithful ignorance is better than “ presumptuous knowledge. Seek merits; you will find “ nothing but punishment, O the depth! Peter denies; “ the thief believes; O the depth! Do you seek a reason? “ I will tremble at the depth. Do you reason? I will wonder. Do you dispute? I will believe. I see the depth, “ I reach not the bottom. Paul rested, because he found “ admiration. He calls the *judgments of God unsearchable*; “ and are you come to scrutinize them; he says his ways “ are past finding out; and are you come to investigate “ them?”

Now, surely if all this be admitted; (and to a great extent I dispute it not) if the divine edicts are “unsearchable,” “past finding out;” if our “contracted intellects,” can-

² Rom. xi. 34.

we can attain to, by following the maxim laid down in the text; that is, by strictly confining our conclusions, to those propositions, that we can legitimately infer, from things that we *really know*. And hence, in the *present case*, I am at liberty to assert; that as we find not in ourselves, any thing resembling *absolute* fore-knowledge, so we can have no conception, either of what it is, or how it exists in the Divine mind; and though we have no right on that account, to deny its existence, in his incomprehensible nature; yet we surely have no right, to assume any vague conjecture of ours as to such knowledge, (or rather our total ignorance of its real nature) as a clear and definite premise, from which we may be at liberty to deduce conclusions in direct opposition to matters of fact; viz. the existence of our own free will, which we *feel* ourselves exercising, every day and, every hour, of our lives.

In what has been said, I do not mean to assert any thing, concerning the abstract contingency of future events. This is a separate question. The preceding observations, are solely intended, to shew by the test so

not examine, cannot "*comprehend God's secret decrees*," if the "*cause*" of the sovereign determination of his will, "is "*hidden in himself*," it appears, that these "*secret decrees*," this "*hidden cause*" are of all things within the compass of speculation, *the least known* to us; and therefore, it follows from the maxim laid down, that they are the most unsuitable things we can imagine, from which, to set about deducing, defining, demonstrating, the laws and proceedings of God's moral government, to the complete neglect, or rather with the total contempt, of observations on the phenomena of that very government, as we see and feel it, to be *actually* conducted, around us, and within us.

often alluded to, the fallacy of arguing from the divine attributes as premises, to the denial of matters of fact and experience. Were this observation kept constantly in mind, it would very much narrow the object of controversy in questions of this nature: since it would throw out of consideration, all the confusing perplexities of abstract hypotheses; and confine our inquiry, (so far at least, as it is connected with natural religion) to a *practical* investigation of this question; *How is man actually constituted?*

In all that precedes, I have in order to avoid unnecessary discussion, conceded the possibility, of deducing the physical attributes from *the mere consciousness of existence*. Though it seems to me, that many great, if not insuperable difficulties, might be shown to attend the *actual* attempt. For I conceive, that both in its progress and in its final conclusions, many ideas, are and must be involved, which could not be inferred from this consciousness *alone*; and which, if derived from other sources, should be regarded as *additional* postulates, which no subsequent results can be allowed to contradict.

To give only one example, in our idea of *power*. The consciousness of existence, implies no more, than the power of creating and maintaining a being like ourselves. But this is evidently but a small portion, of the conception attached, to the omnipotence of Deity: especially, where that conception, is extended to the consideration of moral government; an extension, which must evidently introduce many deductions, that can only grow out of the contemplation of moral phenomena, whether without us or within us; and which our ultimate reasoning, about omnipotence, (at least, so far as it is supposed to be dis-

played in the exercise of sovereignty,) ought not to violate.

For fear of being misunderstood, on so momentous a subject, I beg leave further to remark, that I do not for a moment mean to insinuate, that we have any right to limit Almighty energy, by our *vague conjectures*. There are certain things which all admit to be impossible; but this arises, in general, from the propositions in which they are announced, containing in their very terms, something absurd or contradictory; not, from any presumptuous inclination, to set boundaries to omnipotence. All things that are possible at all, must be possible to God. But there are many propositions, concerning the possibility or impossibility of which, we are evidently incompetent to decide; as being cases, where, we have neither the warrant of demonstration, nor of facts. As for example, whether omnipotence might have excluded moral evil, from the moral government of free agents. On such a mysterious subject, I should prefer acknowledging my inability to form a judgment. Confined to our little speck in the creation, our knowledge of facts is too limited, to enable us to determine whether the vast purposes of Deity, could have been effectuated as he saw best, without the permission of evil. This we know, that it does exist; and in our own individual cases, the verdict of conscience, which is as binding as the most conclusive demonstration, tells us, that the fault is our own. The means of judging any further, providence has not vouchsafed: I would therefore, neither affirm that it might have been prevented, nor would I presume to deny it. Let us go no farther than our premises warrant; beyond this, it is as sound

philosophy, as it is practical humility, to confess our ignorance: and when assertions can have no better support than speculation, our truest wisdom is silence, and the safest posture of the soul is self-prostration.

What shall we say then, of the philosophy, and the humility of those, who on the mere conjecture, without any warrant from facts, that God might have excluded moral evil, leap at once to the conclusion, that he has actually *decreed* its existence? ! !

Thus Calvin argues against those, who would impute Adam's fall, and the consequent introduction of sin and misery, to his own fault, and not to an unavoidable decree.—“ They maintain, that he was “ possessed of free choice, that he might be the author of “ his own fate, but that God decreed nothing more than “ to treat him according to his desert. If so weak a “ scheme as this be received, *what will become of God's “ omnipotence*, by which he governs all things, according “ to his secret counsels, independently of every person “ or thing besides? ” and a little further on—“ Nor “ should it be thought absurd, to affirm, that God not “ only foresaw the fall of the first man, and the ruin of “ his posterity in him, but *also arranged all by the “ determination of his own will*. For as it belongs to “ his wisdom to foreknow every thing future, so *it “ belongs to his power* to will and govern all things by “ his hand.” (Insts. V. II. P. 443—4.) In both which statements, the mere assertion of God's omnipotence, is considered as a sufficient premise, from which to deduce the decree of evil. Omnipotence; as to which the Deity alone, and not we, can judge, how far the exercise of it in any case, could be consistent with his gracious designs,

and his intrinsic excellence ; and moral evil, which the monitor that HE has given us, pronounces, (in our own cases at least,) to be the result of our wilful disobedience, not of any irresistible decree. Here then, there is an instance of the most confident reasoning, which sets out from a subject beyond the utmost stretch of our intellects, and about which we know next to nothing ; and concludes, with contradicting the testimony of a witness, who speaks from our inmost souls.

Thus also Zanchius (according to Mr. Toplady) deduces from the omnipotence of God ; first, “ that he
“ might have eternally saved every individual of mankind,
“ without reprobating any.” “ He could, had it been
“ his pleasure, have prevented the fall of angels and men,
“ and thereby have hindered sin from having any footing
“ in and among his creatures.” Second, “ That since
“ all things are subject to the divine controul, God not
“ only works efficaciously on his elect, in order that they
“ may will and do that which is pleasing in his sight ;
“ but does, likewise, frequently and powerfully suffer
“ the wicked to fill up the measure of their iniquities,
“ by committing fresh sins. Nay, he sometimes, but for
“ wise and gracious ends, permits his own people to
“ transgress ; for he has the hearts and wills of all men
“ in his own hand, and inclines them to good, or deli-
“ vers them up to evil, as he sees fit, *yet without being*
“ *the author of sin!!!*” Third, “ God, as the primary
“ and efficient cause of all things, is not only the author
“ of those actions done by the elect, as actions, but also
“ as they are good actions ; whereas on the other hand,
“ though he may be said to be *the author of all the*
“ *actions done by the wicked*, yet he is not the author
“ of them in a *moral and compound sense*, as they are

“*sinful, but physically, simply, and sensu diviso, as they are mere actions, abstractedly from all consideration of the goodness or badness of them. Although there is no action whatever, which is not, in some sense, either good or bad; yet we can easily conceive of an action, purely as such, without adverting to the quality of it; so that the distinction between the action itself, and its denomination of good or evil, is very obvious and natural.*” (Toplady’s Predestination, chiefly translated from Zanchius, Lond. 1769, p. 21—25.) Thus, to make the Deity the omnipotent agent of evil, as well as of good, we are to imagine him (through the instrumentality of his creatures,) as effectuating a wicked action, but only *physically, simply, and sensu diviso, and abstractedly from all consideration of its goodness or badness; that is, in other words, either without perceiving, or else without caring, whether the action be good or bad; for in no other way, can we suppose the quality of the action to be kept out of view.* So here, either we have omniscience *blindfolded*, or immaculate holiness *indifferent*, while omnipotence invested with the exalting agency of evil, is set up as the chief mover, in bringing about the actions of wicked men, and accursed spirits!!!

To such absurd distinctions, and appalling conclusions, are, and ever must be driven, those, who will presume to fathom the depth of Deity, with a human plummet; in place of resting contented with those humble, but abundant springs of knowledge, which his paternal wisdom and mercy, have opened within our immediate reach.

Many other instances might be adduced, in which

the established rule of philosophizing I have assumed as my guide, is obviously violated, by deducing from our *ignorance* of the *physical* attributes, conclusions opposed to our moral sense, and moral phenomena.— But the reasoning is so obvious, that it is unnecessary to pursue the subject any further. Those who are acquainted with the details of the controversy, will easily perceive its application.

Under this head, it is but just to observe, that *modern* Calvinists reject the decrees of reprobation, and the Divine causation of evil. And it is remarkable, that they fortify themselves in thus curtailing the doctrines of their master, by the very appeal to common sense and conscience, the propriety of which, I have endeavoured to establish; but the force of which they will not admit, when directed against those *remaining dogmas* of the system to which they are *still attached*.

One of their latest advocates, in objecting to Dr. Milner's statements, (concluding pages of his Essay on Liberty) respecting the origin of evil, reasons thus. “ But “ though on the subjects of Liberty and Necessity, it “ would be difficult to find elsewhere, so much accuracy “ united with so much beauty and force of illustration, “ the same commendation cannot be applied to the author's statements respecting the origin of evil. On this “ most solemn and important question, the only views “ which seem to have suggested themselves to his mind, “ are indeed not only unsatisfactory but *fearfully ominous* “ *in their aspect on the great doctrines of moral accountability and the true natures of virtue and vice*. Did “ Calvinism necessarily induce the consequences there “ supposed, it were safer far, at once to accept the Ar-

"minian hypothesis, with all its sophisms and contra-
 "dictions. If it were to be admitted at all, that the
 "Divine Being is the *cause*, in any sense, of *evil*, of
 "moral evil, the qualifying epithets of "good and be-
 "nevolent," attached to such a cause, avail little, tow-
 "ards relieving the mind from the most *painful dis-*
 "*quietude*. To *acquiesce in the notion is impossible*: it is
 "*shocking to reason, and distressing to every pious*
 "*feeling*. The philosophy which *terminates in such*
 "*a conclusion*, must be *vain philosophy* for none of
 "its *principles* can rest upon *convictions clearer and*
 "more *indubitable*, than does the contrast of that con-
 "clusion, that we ourselves are the authors of our sins,
 "and as such justly amenable to punishment. The
 "primary laws of our constitution, which to us are the
 "ultimate tests of truth and falsehood, oblige us to admit
 "our guilt, nor can we by any effort of reasoning, how-
 "ever subtle and flattering, permanently free our-
 "selves from the conviction.

"The author, however, seems to state it as a result
 "that the righteous governor, is "the good and bene-
 "volent cause of evil," and then forbids any investi-
 "gation into the manner, or reasons of such a fact.
 "But who can be *content quietly to carry in the bosom*
 "*such a shocking sentiment*? To tell us that we may
 "proceed up to this point, and then rest, is to place us
 "on a pinnacle of the most tottering fabric which man
 "ever reared, and then, at the peril of destruction to
 "caution us not to move. It is to cast us afloat on the
 "stormiest waves of disquiet, or to strand us on the
 "most desolate shores of scepticism." (Gilbert's Memoir
 of Dr. Williams, 568.)

Whoever will take the trouble, of carefully examining Dr. Milner's most candid statements, shall find, that *admitting the previous parts of his system* (so highly praised by Mr. Gilbert) it is impossible for an ingenuous mind, to avoid the revolting conclusion, here so justly denounced. This inevitable tendency to so ominous a result, has been always perceived, and urged by their opponents, against the Doctrines of Necessity and Absolute predestination.

Those whose minds are wedded to a system, will ever be more ready, to close their eyes against its consequences, than to reform its defects. But many able, candid, and pious men, have yielded an honest and manly conviction, to the force of these remonstrances.²

It was evidently a perception of the impossibility of escaping,—in the *regular course of metaphysical reasoning*,—from the legitimacy of Dr. Milner's conclusion, that drove Mr. Gilbert, to break its chains; and to take refuge from its awful and frightful consequences, in the foregoing bold and beautiful appeal, to the common sense and conscience of mankind.

To me his argument is quite satisfactory. But I must be allowed to suggest, that those Calvinists who adopt it, would do well to reflect, how, after such an unqualified protest against the validity of mere speculation, they can again consistently resort to its subtleties, to

² See short notices of some of these converts from Calvinism, in the Appendix to Jackson's life of John Goodwin, (London 1822.)

patch up a delusive support, for those remaining dogmas, which,—according to the candid admissions of Dr. Milner,—lead inevitably to such portentous results. Dogmas, which, it could be easily shown, are themselves equally open to similar objections, equally impotent against an appeal to the primary laws of our “constitution which to us are the ultimate tests of “truth and falsehood;” equally “shocking to reason “and distressing to every pious feeling.”

In truth, there is no medium between the two modes of proceeding; that practical inquiry, whose *foundation rests exclusively in moral phenomena*; or that metaphysical reasoning, which, with desperate consistency, *rejects* them both in its *commencement* and its *termination*.

More timid reasoners, who appeal to realities, only against those, whose abstractions *surpass* their own; may be *nearer* the truth, in proportion to the justness and extensiveness of that appeal: but they never can produce a concordant system. They may think to fight doubly armed—with hypotheses, against their practical opponents and with facts, against their *more* speculative brethren. But, while they attempt to wield a sword in each hand, they forget to carry a shield on either; and assailed on both sides by their own admissions, they can present no unbroken or consistent defence to their adversaries, and must ultimately sink, under their united attacks.

V. The principle, on which the preceding remarks with regard to the physical attributes of the Deity depend, is equally applicable to his moral attributes. But since right conceptions concerning these, are of still greater importance, as they enter fundamentally into our notion

of his moral government, it may not seem improper to offer, with reference to them also, some further observations.

Even supposing it possible, to deduce the *physical* attributes, from the *naked consciousness of existence*; it seems to me, that *this premiss* can hardly be adduced, as a sufficient foundation for the *moral* attributes.

To try the question fairly, we should endeavour to imagine a person born without the use of his senses. How could such a one, attain any notions of justice, mercy, benevolence, equity, &c. &c.? These are evidently complex ideas, which are gradually collected, from observing, and reasoning on,—the various domestic and social relations of life, the works of creation, the arrangements of providence, the prosperity of exertion, the degradation of indolence, the happiness and approbation connected with virtue, the wretchedness and infamy consequent on vice;—from all of which, reason and our moral sense, deduce the well *established maxims* on those points, which regulate human affairs. How difficult it is, to instruct in these matters, those who are destitute of one sense only, the teachers of the deaf and dumb can attest. How inadequate then, would be the reasonings of that unfortunate, who should be destitute of all his senses, to work out just, or indeed any conceptions on these subjects.

Now all our reasoning, about the *moral attributes*, and *moral government* of the Deity, are only applications of *those maxims*, to the supposed nature, and the actual proceedings,—as far as we know them,—of

the great first cause; and could not (in natural religion) be attained in any other way. Hence those maxims, embodying the dictates of reason, and the suggestions of conscience,—on a careful observation of moral phenomena,—are the *things best known* to us, and the results of their application to Deity are evidently *less so*. It is true, indeed, that such application should be made with the utmost diffidence and humility: seeing that his *intrinsic* nature must ever remain unknown to us; and that any close inspection of his works, is confined to this limited span of our little earth. But still *this is the only way* (exclusive of Revelation) by which we can arrive at any just conceptions of his intentions towards us; that is, of his moral government. Hence we are justified in concluding, that if we *mean to reason at all*, about the divine economy, or moral attributes, we must do it, by laying down these two fundamental propositions. (1) That God is the *creative source*, of all that is excellent or praise-worthy, according to the *ordinary* notions, of justice, mercy, equity, &c. that approve themselves to reason and conscience. (2) That however unknown, or incomprehensible his *intrinsic* nature may be, and however presumptuous it should be, to attempt to speak of it *definitively*; still we may be perfectly secure in saying, that no conduct can *legitimately* be imputed to Him, which is contradictory to conclusions so *well understood* by us;—so universally received, as part of our *best established* and *least questionable knowledge*.

Nor need we be less satisfied, that this course of argument is conformable to the intentions of Providence; than we are certain, that it is consonant to sound reason. We cannot be acting contrary to His will, in adopting

those conclusions, which he has absolutely forced upon us, by the constitution of our nature, and the moral phenomena around us. On the contrary, it could not but be displeasing to Him, that we should refuse to listen to the testimony of those witnesses, which He has placed in our bosoms ; or reject the evidence of those facts which he presses daily on our attention.

It is, therefore, perfectly illegitimate to argue ; that *justice, mercy, and equity in the Deity, are not to be judged of, by any notions of them that man can form.* For it has been clearly proved, that though there may be much in them, that *exceeds* these notions, there can be nothing *contradictory* thereto. Unless we should suppose, that the Deity has furnished us with indications of his purposes, which it were more reverent to despise, than to respect ; and appointed us guides to the knowledge of himself, whose steps it were safer to forsake than to follow. But, suppose the foregoing position admitted to its full extent, the utmost it could fairly lead to, would be, that *no knowledge* whatsoever of these attributes, could be attained by us ; or rather, to speak more correctly, that these terms are not to be predicated of Deity *in any sense.* For if we affirm them of him at all, we must do it in their ordinary acceptance, (unless we would use them as empty sounds) and to apply them to him in any sense, is, in fact, to assert a knowledge of his character in that respect. So, that the result must be, that we sit down under the admission, that we can neither know nor conjecture, whether the Deity be, or be not, merciful, or just, or equitable !—

Those who would drive us to this conclusion, should, at least, for consistency's sake, be ever afterwards *silent* on this subject ; and, above all, should not pretend to

force on us, *other* definitions of these attributes, which, according to their own statement, can have no better *foundation*, than *acknowledged ignorance*.

But it is from their adversaries only, they demand this confession of ignorance ; and it is on them alone, they impose silent submission. Whoever attends closely to their definitions of the moral attributes, (some of which shall be quoted presently,) will perceive, that their true object is, to divert our attention from those things, which we are *capable of knowing* ; that they may be allowed to take their premises, from the doctrine of infinities, which *none can comprehend*. And, while they represent the paths of ordinary inquiry, as closed against us, it is only, that we may the more submissively follow them, into the bewildering regions of metaphysical subtilty.

I should be very sorry, to attribute this line of proceeding, to any want of candour. For, sure I am, that it arises solely, from an inconsiderate zeal for dogmas, that are most *unfoundedly supposed* by their advocates, to redound to the glory of God. A zeal, under the influence of which, they appear to feel it, not only allowable, but laudable, to seize on any argument, however far-fetched, that seems in their favour : while they reject, as silly and presumptuous, considerations so obviously reasonable and natural, as to have become *trite* and *common-place* : a circumstance, which is in itself a proof, that general consent, has ranked them among the *truths best known* to ordinary men.

Now, although this line of proceeding, is not the result of sober design, but of heedless enthusiasm ; it

produces nevertheless, all the effect of subtil advocacy, and skilful generalship. For, that pleader, who can persuade the judge, to turn out of court, *without a hearing*, his opponent's evidence and counsel, may be sure of a verdict, whatever be the character of his own witnesses; and he, who by any stratagem, can induce his enemy to withdraw his troops, may hold quiet possession of the field, though it be only with men of straw.

Hence, when persons of ordinary understandings, try to judge, (not of the Deity himself) but of *their representations* of the Deity, by the usual notions of justice, mercy, and equity; they exclaim against them, as arraigning the majesty of God, as venturing to bring his proceedings to the standard of human judgment, as pretending to penetrate into the secrets of omniscience, and presuming to stay the arm of the Almighty.³ Having thus closed the mouths of the pious and timid,

³ Thus Calvin describes the opposers of Predestination.

“ When the human mind hears these things, its *petulance* breaks all restraint, and it discovers as serious and violent agitation as if alarmed by the sound of a martial trumpet.” (Insts. v. ii. p. 426.) Again, “ *Profane persons*, I confess, suddenly lay hold of something relating to the subject of predestination, to furnish occasion for objections, cavils, reproaches, and ridicule. But if we are frightened from it by their *impudence*, all the principal articles of the faith must be concealed, for there is scarcely one of them which *such persons* as those have not violated by *blasphemy*.” (Ibid p. 403.) “ These things will amply suffice for persons of *piety and modesty*, who remember that they are men. But as those virulent *adversaries*,

they take possession of the rostrum without resistance; and proceed to define and dogmatize on those very attributes,—just described by themselves as *incomprehensible*,—with all the assumption of logical accuracy, and irresistible demonstration. Thus it is, that we are called on to forsake the guidance of experience, that we may, with them, the more contentedly follow the *ignis fatuus* of speculation: and thus we are commanded to

“&c.” (Ibid. 427.) “Nor let us be ashamed to follow the example of Paul, and stop the mouths of *unreasonable* and *wicked* men in this manner.” &c. (431) *Impiety* produces also a second objection. “For this is their *profane* complaint, why should God impute to the fault of man, those things which were rendered necessary by his predestination?” &c. (432) “The doctrine of God’s predestination is *calumniated* by its adversaries, as involving a third absurdity.” (436) “Wherefore some people *falsely and wickedly charge* God with a violation of equal justice.” &c. (437)

Thus also Mr. Toplady, or rather Zanchius. “From what has been delivered under this head, I would infer, that they, who deny the power God has of doing as he will with his creatures, and exclaim against unconditional decrees, as cruel, tyrannical, and unjust; either know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm; or are *wilful blasphemers of his name, and perverse rebels against his sovereignty*; to which, at last, however unwillingly, they will be forced to submit.” (Toplady’s abridged Translation of Zanchius on Predestination, Lond. 1769, p. 34.)

I readily allow, that Calvin uses these hard expressions, on the supposition, that Irrespective Predestination, is evi-

shut out the light of common sense, that we may wonder in the dark, at the phantoms of their magic lantern.

It is also important to remark, that the moral attributes are not so liable as the physical, to be affected by the abuse of the doctrine of infinites. For, in the latter, the apparent connexion,—at least of some of them,—with the contemplation of time and space, seems to surround them inevitably with those indefinite notions, which grow out of the consideration of number and magnitude.

dently a scripture doctrine. For in several places, he explicitly acknowledges, that *reason cannot fathom the Divine decrees*; which nevertheless, he makes the *foundation of foreknowledge and all the system*. This admission therefore is sufficient proof, that in *his opinion*, it cannot be established, as a tenet of natural religion; and accordingly, he forbids all investigation thereof, further than it is *revealed*.—But surely, he might have known, that many pious men, and some of them among the primitive fathers did not consider it a doctrine of scripture;

Yet Calvin himself, with a curious inconsistency, endeavours occasionally, to show the reasonableness of his opinions. For he was too acute not to perceive, that the knowledge of himself, which God has taught us by revelation, cannot, in such awfully important matters, directly contradict that knowledge, which He equally has taught us, by reason and conscience. It is not therefore fair arguing, to exclude his adversaries, from the benefit of that reason, which he is sure to make use of, whenever he fancies it to be on his own side.

Whereas, acts of justice, or of benevolence, are definite things; and though the supposition that they will be exhibited, in *every case* where they should be expected, may, in hyperbolical language, introduce the term infinite; yet it evidently does not affect the mind with the same perplexity, as the attempt to reflect on unbounded space, or eternal duration.

On this account, it is evident, that the *moral* attributes are more susceptible of being comprehended and discussed without perplexity, than the others; and of course, that they are *more known* to us, and more capable of being compared with the ordinary maxims of mankind. Hence it follows, that to argue from the physical attributes, as premises, to them, is evidently to violate the principle laid down, and to introduce irremediable ambiguity, into what might otherwise be, at least in some degree, intelligible. But on examination it will be found, that this is the very method pursued by Predestinarians; who resolve all the moral attributes, into those of omnipotence and omniscience, eternal and unchangeable existence. Having, thus rashly and unphilosophically involved all notions about them in the chaos of infinities, and thereby produced a "confusion twice confounded," it is not wonderful, that the approach of common sense, should be felt as a startling intrusion into this region of hallucinations; and, that the ordinary principles of human judgment, should be decried, as totally unavailing to the solution of such profound enigmas.

Of the moral attributes, that of Mercy, is perhaps most open to the above mentioned abuse. For, as the *number* of transgressions may be supposed increased

ad infinitum, so men,—in imagining God's pardon extended without limitation to all,—may fancy, that they have formed to themselves an idea of *infinite* mercy; an idea, which, it is to be feared, has deceived many to their ruin. And it is curious to observe, how the advocates of Predestination, with their usual propensity to perplex every argument, by the introduction of this term;—not merely as indicating something vast and wonderful, (in which sense, no one would object to it,) but as expressing either numerical or magnitudinal infinity,—are careful to present to us the attribute of mercy under this aspect. Thus Zanchius:—

“When we call the divine mercy *infinite*, we do not mean that it is in a way of grace, extended to *all* men without exception; (and supposing it was, even then it would be very improperly denominated infinite on that account, since the objects of it, though all men taken together, would not amount to a *multitude strictly and properly infinite*;) but that this mercy towards his own elect, as it knows no beginning, so it is *infinite in duration* and shall know neither period nor intermission.” (Topl. p. 34.)

I may be allowed to remark, that according to the foregoing definition, the exhibitions of this attribute, in its *ordinary* acceptation of *pardoning* mercy, must, in order to attain to this numerical infinity, be continually repeated through eternity; that is, the Deity must go on for ever pardoning, and therefore the objects of it for ever sinning!!! But, to do our author justice, it must be admitted, that his sense of this word, is as little in conformity with common usage, as the meaning he attaches to any of the other moral attributes. In fact,

by *mercy* he means, ELECTION! Thus, his second position with regard to it, is:—

Pos. 2, “Mercy is not in the Deity, as it is in us, a passion, or affection; every thing of that kind being incompatible with the purity, perfection, independency and unchangeableness of his nature; but when this attribute is predicated of him, it only notes his *free and eternal will, or purpose, of making some of the fallen race happy, by delivering them from the guilt and dominion of sin, and communicating himself to them in a way consistent with his own inviolable justice, truth and holiness.* This seems to be the *proper definition of mercy*, as it relates to the spiritual and eternal good of those who are its objects. But it should be observed:”—

Pos. 3, “That the mercy of God, taken in its more large and indefinite sense, may be considered, (1) as *general*, (2) as *special*.”

“His *general* mercy is no other than what we commonly call his *bounty*; by which he is, more or less, *providentially* good to all mankind, both elect and non elect: Mat. v. 45, Luke vi. 35, Acts xiv. 17, and xvii. 25, 28.”

“By his *special* mercy, he, as Lord of all, hath, in a spiritual sense, compassion on as many of the fallen race, as are the objects of his free and eternal favor, the effects of which special mercy are, the *redemption* and *justification* of their persons, through the satisfaction of Christ, the *effectual vocation, regeneration*, and sanctification of them by his spirit, the infallible

“and final preservation of them in a state of grace on earth, and their everlasting glorification in heaven.” (P. 25.)

But, lest there should be attached to the character of the Deity, any vestige of *pardoning mercy* in its usual sense, that is, forgiveness and favor, extended on repentance, to those, who were *previously regarded and condemned as sinners*; he shows, in his next position, that this attribute is never exercised to any, but the *elect*, that is, to those who *never from all eternity*, were otherwise regarded, than with *unchangeable* love; and therefore, never could have been proper objects of *pardoning mercy* in any sense of the term.

Pos. 4. There is no contradiction, whether real or seeming, between these two assertions, (1) that the blessings of grace and glory are peculiar to those whom God hath, in his decree of Predestination, set apart for himself; and (2) that the gospel declaration runs, that *whosoever willeth may take of the water of life freely*, Rev. xxii. 17. Since, in the *first* place, none *can* will, or unfeignedly and spiritually desire, a part in these privileges, but those whom God previously *makes* willing and desirous; and *secondly*, that he gives this will to, and excites this desire in, none but his own elect. (P. 36.)

Here then, *first*, we have the “Father of mercies, and “the God of all comfort,” stripped of his most glorious prerogative; the King of kings, robbed of the brightest gem in his diadem, that of *pardoning* grace. For *they* cannot be described as restored to divine favour, who were never excluded from it; nor can *that* be

called forgiveness, which was never preceded by displeasure.

Secondly, we have him represented, as loving some certain persons, (to the exclusion of all others,) with an *unalterable* love; that is, approving of, and delighting in them at *all times*, and *equally*, whether they be distinguished for faith and obedience, or infamous for unbelief and licentiousness.

Now *Conscience*, our internal monitor—commissioned by the Creator himself—continually announces to us, with a voice that cannot be silenced or evaded, that while we are living in rebellion and sin, we are, and must be, odious in his sight. This is an instinctive conviction, a self-evident principle, which cannot be shaken off, as long as light is opposed to darkness, truth to falsehood, holiness to pollution, and communion with God, to fellowship with Belial.

Surely then, those who affect to be jealous for God's glory,—and I doubt not their sincerity,—should pause, before they ascribe to him, on merely speculative grounds, a course of proceeding, the imputation of which to any earthly monarch, would be justly resented as a libel on his Government; since, it would amount to asserting, that he would degrade the public sanctions of virtue, into badges of private preference; that he would tarnish in the gift, the honors he conferred; and taint in their destination, the streams of his favour.

In addition to the above, all the maxims of moral discipline, all the notions inseparable from a state of responsibility and trial, are opposed to such a monstrous supposition.

Let it also be remembered, that the appeal is here to *practical* conclusions, which are forced upon us by moral phenomena, and approved of by the common sense of all unprejudiced men. Nay, I am convinced, that those very persons, who, while under the infatuating influence of speculation, can thus misrepresent—unintentionally I am sure—the character and conduct of the most High, are in practice, too sincerely zealous for the progress of virtue, too keenly alive to the discriminating excellence of impartial rule, not to reprobate similar conduct, in the weakest of poor mortal kings.

If then, we should commence all theological inquiry with the things *best known* to us, the admonitions of enlightened conscience, the deductions of practical wisdom, the universally received axioms of moral economy, we must at once reject a scheme, one of whose very postulates, is a definition, setting all these at defiance :

Nor is such a representation of divine love, less awfully dangerous in its bearings on practical piety, than it is derogatory to divine holiness, and destructive of all distinctions between virtue and vice. The true character of principles, is always to be estimated by their *operative tendency*, when applied to human nature in general. And surely, it must gradually remove all fear of sin, as odious to God ; and damp all aspirations after holiness, as pleasing to him ; were beings corrupt by nature, (and therefore ever inclined to views favouring their corruption,) to *act* on the notion, that the elect of God are *always* and *equally* dear to him, whatever be their character or conduct. Alas ! even as it is, man is but too apt to think lightly of transgression. In truth, *they* cannot duly estimate the holiness of God, who do not look for it,

in every design of his providence, in every object of his love ; nor can *they* shrink as they ought, from the first aspect of sin, who do not recognize on his front, the appalling brand of divine wrath, that stamps him for ever the outcast of creation.

I have already quoted, (p. 49) the very just and forcible appeal to moral and practical convictions, adduced by modern Calvinism, *against* the *ultra* doctrine of the divine causation of evil ; and the remarks just made serve to show, if I mistake not, that the very same appeal can be used against the foregoing essential tenet of modern Calvinism itself : viz. the *unchangeable* love of irrespective election to those who are its objects, in *every period* of their progress, whether they be *actually* at the moment *holy or polluted*. For we may say, in almost the very words of this appeal, “ The primary laws of our constitution, which to us, are the ultimate tests of truth “ and falsehood, oblige us to admit,” that, unrepenting sinners, in their *persons and in their prayers are an abomination to the Lord*. And again ; of a tenet, which thus supposes divine love and complacency to be lavished on such objects, we may surely say ; “ That “ it leads to views fearfully ominous in their aspect on “ the great doctrines of moral accountability, and the “ true natures of virtue and vice.” “ To acquiesce in “ the notion is impossible ; it is shocking to reason, and distressing to every pious feeling. The philosophy which “ terminates in such a conclusion, must be vain philosophy ; for none of its principles can rest upon convictions, clearer and more indubitable, than does the contrast of that conclusion :” that both sin, and unrepenting sinners, must be odious in the sight of *Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*.

That the right to resort to this appeal, exists equally in each case, is self-evident; and, as to its conclusiveness, let every awakened conscience, let every unprejudiced, reflecting, penitent soul, judge for itself.

I may also observe, that such an appeal, would have been unnecessary in *any case*, if inquiry had *commenced*—as it should have done,—not with definitions of the divine attributes,—the very things to be ascertained, the very things we are ignorant of,—but with those primary laws of our constitution, those ultimate tests of truth and falsehood, those facts, feelings, and moral principles, to which, the appeal has been *at last* submitted.⁴

⁴ The principle, against which, the preceding arguments are directed, is not confined to the statements of individuals only. We can trace either it, or its *equivalent*, in most of the Calvinistic confessions of faith. But as this is not the place to consider them in their entire bearing, I only allude to it in its abstract character. Thus it is said:—"This perseverance of the saints, depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and *unchangeable* love of God the Father, &c." (Westm. Conf. chap. xvii. sec. 2.)

"True believers, by reason of the *unchangeable* love of God, and his decree and covenant to give them perseverance, &c." (Larger Scotch Catech. chap. 7, quest. 9.)

The foregoing seem to speak with reference to *saints and believers* alone; and if it were supposed that only *while* they were *such*, they were the objects of *unchangeable* love, I would not object to the expression. But then, I never could admit, that those living in gross and wilful

Before considering, in the next place, the *Justice* or *Equity* of God, as our sovereign ruler; it is necessary to premise, what is the true question at issue, between irrespective Predestinarians and their opponents.—*First* then, the inquiry is *not*, whether the *actual* government carried on by the deity, *is* just or unjust. This method of stating the matter in debate, is, by predestinarians, very frequently, and very unfairly, put into

sin, could be justly designated by any such titles, or could be the objects of divine complacency. Nor can I collect from the context, that the framers of these formularies, meant, by such titles, to introduce any restriction as to *time* or *periods*, but rather, that they really had in their minds, an *eternally* unchangeable love; for example, that it was in all respects the same, *before* repentance and conversion, as *at* or *after* it.

The continental Calvinistic Confessions, generally speak, not so much of the immutable *love* of God, as of the *immutable counsel of his will*. I cannot, however, see how this alters the aspect of his character; or removes the monstrous aspersion on his holiness, which is involved in the other statement. For it represents the deity, as at *all times* and *equally* determined, to bestow on certain individuals, infinite blessings, whatever be their conduct. And, as it is admitted, that these persons may at different times, as well after, as before conversion, be immersed in gross vice; so, it follows that this determination—in consequence of its *immutability*—must exist in the divine mind, as firmly at such periods, as at any other time. A statement this, which it is impossible, for any awakened, pious, unsophisticated conscience to receive. Nay, which even the pangs of a guilty conscience, *practically* refute: pangs, in which the heathens themselves could recognise,

the mouths of their adversaries, with the evident design of pre-judging all their arguments, by resolving them into impious murmurs, against the conduct and purposes of the Almighty. But every one is ready to admit, that whatever can be *proved*, to be *actully* ordained or executed by him, both *is* and *must* be,—so far

both the sentence and the execution of divine displeasure ; both the judge's warrant, and the tormentor's scourge.

It also represents our sovereign, as immutably unhesitatingly determined, even at the moments of their greatest sinfulness, to bestow on sinners, those sure and final rewards, which reason must ever regard, as the eternal sanctions, not of the violation of his commands, but of their observance ; not of sin, but of holiness : a representation, which is contrary to the most obvious maxims of moral government. Thus it is, that speculation,—arguing on the vain assumption, that it can, *a priori*, penetrate the divine will, and define the divine decrees,—turns a deaf ear to the loudest suggestions of conscience, and smothers the strongest convictions of common sense ; violating without compunction, “those primary laws of our constitution, which to us are the ultimate tests of truth and falsehood.”

I beg, again, and again, to repeat, that I am only arguing at present about natural religion ; and therefore, I have avoided introducing the various topics, which are usually mixed up with this statement, in confessions of faith. The men who framed them, were generally of undoubted piety, and have done all they could,—consistently with a dogma, so calculated to mislead them,—to neutralize its pernicious tendencies, and invalidate its objectionable consequences. How far they have succeeded, it is not my business, in this place, to inquire.

at least as *He* is concerned—perfectly just and equitable. The discussion then, is not not at all upon this topic; but whether, in *reality*, certain things *are*, or are *not* done by him: whether, or not, certain plans are pursued by him, in his sovereign dispensations: in short, whether it be, or be not, according to irrelative decrees, that he determines the eternal happiness or misery, of his rational and accountable creatures. The investigation therefore, is not as to whether the *actual* moral government of God *be* just or unjust; but as to what *really* is the *nature* of that government. This is in truth, the general statement of the question; and it is therefore evident, that it is really an inquiry, not as to a matter of opinion, but as to a matter of fact.

But *Secondly*; since only temporal things come under our own observation, and since in but very few even of these, is the plan of Deity fully developed in this world, it is evident, that the number of cases is very limited indeed, in which *experience* can enable us to decide this point. As to the *remainder*, the question changes its character; and though the inquiry is still as to matters of fact, the mode of pursuing it is altered, and from one of actual observation, becomes one of *inference*.

When the day of awful retribution arrives, facts will determine, what is now only matter of doubt and discussion. But till then, the question returns:—what are the principles according to which God *actually* governs his moral and accountable creatures? and how are we to ascertain them? Here, sound philosophy tells us, that we must commence our reasoning with those things that we know best; and therefore, as has been

already shown, that we are not at liberty with respect to this, or any other of the moral attributes, to ascribe to the Deity, any line of proceeding, which is repugnant to those generally received axioms deducible from moral phenomena, by conscience, and common sense. But, on examining the predestinarian definitions of divine Justice, the same violation of philosophical reasoning will appear, as has been already remarked with regard to the other attributes. And it will be found, that instead of deducing it from those things we know best, and of which we are capable of forming, at least, some judgment,—however imperfect it may be, when applied to the actions of Deity,—they decry and denounce all these, not only as irrelative and useless, but as presumptuous and blasphemous. And then, as a proof of greater humility, they commence at once with deductions from the infinite incomprehensible nature of God: and by way of greater reverence, they proceed, from such unfounded speculations, to dogmatise on what *must* be the character of his government; instead of endeavouring to ascertain what *it actually is*, by observations on, and inferences from those portions of it, which he has placed within our reach. Among which sources of induction, it must always be remembered, that I mean to include, not only external but internal moral phenomena, and the axioms and principles derivable from both, and in a measure forced on us by divine wisdom, through the intervention of those social and domestic relations, in which he has placed us. (See preceding discourse, p. 9. 25.)

The Predestinarian method of defining Divine Justice, (or rather of obscuring every conception that might be rationally formed of it, by denying in reference there-

to, the applicability of all our ordinary notions, and substituting abstract speculations in their room,) will be seen in the few following extracts. These might be multiplied, were it necessary ; but, as it is not my object to controvert any particular author, but only a certain unphilosophical system of arguing ; I merely make such quotations, as shall enable me to state in the words of others, the points I object to.

Calvin, in arguing on that celebrated text, (Rom. ix. 20, 21.) which is the last resort of Predestinarians, when they cannot defend their system, against the imputation of manifest injustice, reasons thus :—

“ For what stronger reason can be alleged, than
 “ when we are directed to consider who God is? How
 “ could any injustice be committed by him, who is the
 “ Judge of the world? If it is the peculiar property
 “ of the nature of God to do justice, then he naturally
 “ loves righteousness and hates iniquity. The apostle
 “ therefore, has not resorted to sophistry, as if he were
 “ in danger of confutation, but has shown that the *rea-*
 “ *son of the Divine justice is too high to be measured*
 “ *by a human standard, or comprehended by the little-*
 “ *ness of the human mind.* The Apostle, indeed ac-
 “ knowledges that there is a depth in the Divine
 “ judgments sufficient to absorb the minds of all mankind,
 “ if they attempt to penetrate it”*****“And men betray
 “ astonishing madness in desiring to comprehend
 “ immensity within the limits of their reason.” (Ins.
 v. ii. p. 430.)

Not being concerned at present with the appeal to scripture, I shall not observe on the foregoing misappli-

cation of the text alluded to. But on Calvin's reasoning, abstractedly considered, the remark is obvious ; that it not only maintains Divine justice,—which all allow,—but contends, that we cannot know what it is: that the “reason of Divine justice is too high to be measured by a human standard, or comprehended by the liteness of the human mind.” Let this be admitted in its full extent, and what follows? Why evidently that an attribute about which such ignorance is thus admitted, cannot, at least by those who make the admission, be insisted on, as an adequate foundation, for the superstructure of a logical and demonstrative system of Theology. Yet it is on such definitions as these, that their whole scheme depends.

When therefore, any line of conduct is spoken of, this question still recurs. How are we to judge, whether this should be *imputed* to God ; or rejected as *unworthy* of him? But, by the foregoing admission, it is evident, that such a question, cannot be decided, by a reference to the *unknown* justice of God.

Either then, we must proceed philosophically, to answer every such inquiry, by applying to the conduct under consideration, those standards of justice, which are within our reach, and best known to us ; or, if we exclude this line of reasoning, we must be satisfied to say that we can come to no decision ; and cannot, with regard to any action however atrociously unjust, pretend to say, whether it ought, or ought not, to be imputed to God. The consequences of which shall be examined further on.

The obvious design of Predestinarians, in speaking concerning the divine justice, in the preceding manner, is, that opportunity may be afforded of imputing to him, any course of action that their scheme may require, without exposing themselves to the objections that might arise against such a course of action, on the score of its manifest injustice. For, according to this system, it is only necessary to assert boldly, that any thing *is* done by God, and such conduct, no matter what be its character, must be immediately admitted to be right: “since
“the divine justice is too high to be measured by a human
“standard, or comprehended by the littleness of the hu-
“man mind.”

Thus, against the decree of reprobation, it is naturally argued, that by dooming its objects to the permanent guidance of their unregenerate and corrupt nature, it fixes them in sin, without any power of avoiding it, and therefore, without any fault of their own. The argument here, is evidently directed, not against any decree, on the supposition that it *is really* God's decree; but against the very *supposition* itself; that any such could be *God's* decree. And its force arises, from its setting out with those things best known to us, and appealing from metaphysical speculation, to some of the plainest axioms of common sense: viz. that no being can do, what he has not the power of doing; nor avoid, what he has not the power of avoiding; and consequently, that he cannot be *justly* blamed in either case—whether for not *doing* the one, or not *avoiding* the other.

Now, how does the Predestinarian answer this argument? Let us hear Calvin himself: “The reprobate
“wish to be thought excusable in sinning, especially,

“since this *necessity is laid* upon them by the ordination of God.” But we deny this to be a just excuse; because the *ordination* of God, by which they complain that they are destined to destruction, is *guided by equity unknown indeed to us, but indubitably certain*; whence we conclude, that they sustain *no misery* that is not *inflicted* on them by the most *righteous judgment* of God. (Ibid. 436.)

Here, the decree of reprobation, against the very *existence* of which as an *act of Deity*, the objection of its *injustice* is directed, is in the *first instance taken for granted*: and then its divine origination thus assumed, is adduced as proof, that “it is *guided by equity, unknown indeed to us, but indubitably certain.*” By which method of arguing, any system of moral government, however tyrannical and unequitable, may, with equal facility, be vindicated and praised. For, it is only to *ascribe* it to *Deity*, and then it must follow, that its wretched and helpless victims, “sustain no misery that “is not inflicted on them, by the *righteous judgment* of “God.”

Such are the effects, of forsaking the path of sound philosophy; which teaches us, to commence our reasonings, with those things, with which we are best acquainted; and therefore, forbids us to impute to the divine character, any thing inconsistent with what we perceive to be just, equitable, and true. And surely, nothing can be more inconsistent, with all the ordinary and most acknowledged principles of justice, than,—where beings are created with a certain nature, and deprived of all power, and all desire to change it—to say, that their very continuance in this nature, their very being,

what they were created, and what they were doomed to remain, should be regarded, as furnishing daily increasing grounds, for the wrath and vengeance of *Him*, who has *so created* them, and so ordained that they should continue for ever. Yet, such is the amount of Calvin's reasoning, in answering a *practical* objection against the decree of reprobation. "They carry their blasphemies
 " much further, by asserting that, any one who is reprobated by God, will labour to no purpose if he endeavour
 " to approve himself to him, by innocence and integrity of
 " life; but here they are convicted of a most impudent
 " falsehood: for whence could such exertion originate but
 " from election? whoever are of the number of the reprobate, being *vessels made to dishonour*, cease not to provoke the divine wrath against them, by continual transgressions, and to confirm by evident proofs the judgment of God *already denounced* against them: so that
 " their *striving with him in vain* is what can never happen." (Ibid. p. 439.) upon which arguing it is unnecessary to offer any further observation.

The definitions, and reasonings of Zanchius, are still more systematic and explicit.

Having inverted, as usual, the true order of philosophical investigation, by commencing with the physical attributes, which are least known to us; he proceeds, under his *fifth* head, to "take notice of His Justice."

"Pos. 1. "God is infinitely, absolutely, and unchangeably just."

This, of course, in the ordinary acceptance of the word *just*, is what all admit; and what anti-predestina-

rians anxiously contend for. But *his* use of the term, must not be judged by of by such a puny standard, for he goes on to inform us in his third position; that "Whatever things God wills or does, are not "willed and done by him, because they were, *in their* "own nature, and *previously* to his willing them, "just and right: or because from their *intrinsic fit-* "ness, he ought to will and do them: but they are "therefore just, right, and proper, *because HE who* "is holiness itself, wills and does them." (Topl. ut supra, p. 33.)

I pass over, the obvious impiety of the conclusion involved in this position; which evidently leads to the inference, that God may be imagined to do something which is not, in its "*own nature*" just and right. It is only necessary to my purpose, to remark; that if the foregoing assertion be admitted, there is an end at once, to *all* reasoning on the subject. Whether our Supreme Governor be just or not, in the true meaning of the word, it is impossible for man to tell. Whether he will rule us, according to the suggestions of conscience, and those maxims of Justice and Equity, by which, he compels us to regulate our conduct towards each other; is a vain conjecture. All our hopes and fears concerning our eternal state, are but idle and useless dreams. For, since the divine ideas of justice, may *eventually* prove widely different, nay, totally *opposed* to ours; it may seem right and just to him, to reward those very actions, which we condemn as unjust, and to punish those, which we approve of and practise as righteous. Thus the Last Day may bring forth a chaos of anomalies; and the decisions of final retribution, may reverse, without appeal, all the verdicts of conscience, and all the most obvious

inferences, from experience and analogy. If this be the case, it is manifestly useless, nay, it is absurd for men to regulate their conduct and tempers, with any reference to futurity. For to prefer virtue to all present advantages, may so little square with the *unknown*, but, ultimately decisive rules of Divine justice, that in place of pleasing him, it may be the very means of forfeiting eternal blessings. And thus they, who are simple enough, to deny themselves in this world, only to be disappointed and condemned in the next, may find themselves, not only here, but hereafter, to be “of all men, the most miserable.” The motto of the wise, should then truly be, “let us eat and drink, for “to-morrow we die”—after death comes the judgment, and what that shall bring forth, who can guess!

Such are the frightful effects—the religious scepticism,—the moral radicalism,—that must inevitably result, from denying the applicability of the ordinary notions of justice,—suggested by conscience, and confirmed by experience,—to the investigation of God’s moral government.

It is true, that all this reasoning, refers only, or rather chiefly, to natural religion. These opinions, it may be said, however dangerous in the abstract, may safely be held in connexion with Revelation; since their only effect would be, to make us submit our will and judgments, to the revealed will of the Almighty, which supplies the purest rules of morals.

To say nothing at present, of the danger of forcing natural and revealed religion, into the arena of an unholy contest, for the diversion of infidels, and the en-

couragement of licentious spectators:—to say nothing of the absurdity of supposing, that God, who cannot lie, would reverse, by the decrees of inspiration, the edicts, which he had already promulgated by the voice of conscience, and the dictates of reason:—to say nothing of all this; I would observe, that the very same error, is carried by the Predestinarian scheme, into the interpretation of scripture;—the very same tendency, to mysticize, and to speculate on, its most intelligible descriptions of the Divine attributes and conduct;—the same desire, to proscribe (with respect to them at least) the ordinary meaning of its language, and the obvious conclusions deduced therefrom, by conscience and common sense. And it may be well asked—when this license of interpretation is permitted, with regard to the Divine attributes and conduct, where can we stop? Are not the notions of these, mixed up with all the inspired rules of practice, and all the scripture grounds of reliance and hope? How then can we separate them? How restore to one set of passages, the plain use of words, which has been discarded in others? How can the ideas and conclusions, already cashiered and disgraced from the service of faith and piety, be again consistently or efficiently enlisted in their ranks?

A lamentable instance of this dangerous species of speculation, is furnished by the same author, in his very next position, concerning the Justice of God. I must premise, however, that I do not produce it, as a correct sample, of predestinarian interpretation in general. But though I sincerely trust, that no scriptural Calvinist of the present day, would deliberately subscribe to its monstrous doctrine, yet, I cannot but perceive something too like it, in the *tendency* of seve-

ral statements, which have currency amongst them. I mean a tendency to *deny* the *obvious* and *ordinary use of language*, when it occurs in the revealed exhibitions, of the divine character and conduct : a tendency, which, if indulged in, must ultimately render, these portions of Revelation, as useless, as if they were written in an unknown tongue.

Pos. 4. " That although *our* works are to be examined by the revealed will of God, and be denominated good or evil, as they agree or disagree with it; yet, the works of *God himself* cannot be brought to any test whatsoever; for his will, being the grand universal law, He himself cannot be, properly speaking, subject to, or obliged by, any law superior to that. Many things are done by him, (such as choosing and reprobating men, without any respect to their works; suffering people to fall into sin, when if it so pleased him, he might prevent it; leaving many backsliding professors to go on and perish in their apostacy, when it is in his divine power to sanctify and set them right; drawing some by his grace, and permitting many others to continue in sin and unregeneracy; condemning those to future misery, whom, if he pleased he could undoubtedly save; with innumerable instances of the like nature, which might be mentioned,) and which if done by *us*, would be *apparently unjust*, in as much as they they would *not square with the revealed will of God* which is the great and only safe rule of our practice. But when *He* does these and such like things, they *cannot but be holy, equitable and worthy of himself*: for since his will is essentially and unchangeably just, whatever he does in consequence of that will,

“ must be just and good likewise. From what has
 “ been delivered under this *fifth* head, (Divine Justice),
 “ I would infer, that they, who deny the power God
 “ has of doing as he will with his creatures, and ex-
 “ claim against unconditional decrees, as cruel, tyran-
 “ nical, and unjust; either know not what they say,
 “ nor whereof they affirm; or are *wilful blasphemers*
 “ *of his name*, and *perverse rebels against his sove-*
 “ *reignty*: to which at last, however unwillingly,
 “ they will be forced to submit.” (Ibid. p. 33.)

Thus, the same reasoning, which in the former position, was shown to be destructive of Natural Religion; is extended with still more daring hardihood, and a still more awfully ominous aspect, to the sacred records of inspiration. Here, it is stated, in so many words, that “ The works of God, cannot be brought to any test whatever; no, not even to that of his *own* declarations concerning himself. Many things may be wrong in man, because they “ do not square with his revealed will,” but if “ *He* does them, they lose their unrighteous taint, and become “ holy, equitable, and worthy of himself. !!!” Hence, it is evidently impossible for us, to form *before hand*, any the remotest judgment, of what God *will do*. It is of no use, in guiding our hopes and fears, on this most important of all our anticipations, to know from his own mouth, that certain things are holy or unholy, just or unjust. They may be so, with regard to man; but nothing but the event, can show, what aspect they may assume, in reference to God.

For example, though it may be wrong in mortals, to deceive us by false expectations, or alarm us by

imaginary terrors; yet, if God adopts such a course, it "cannot but be holy, equitable, and worthy of himself."—Who then, can judge,—till the *event* itself shall determine—whether all the promises of eternal blessings, and all the threats of everlasting punishments, be not entirely delusive; and only intended to answer some temporary, but still useful purpose, perhaps merely to restrain the passions, and curb the licentiousness of wicked men; which would otherwise convulse and subvert society. It may indeed be said,—God has pledged his word, that all his promises shall be fulfilled. But what then? It is quite true, that not to redeem such a pledge, must be wrong in us, "in as much, "as it would not square with the revealed will of God," "But when *He* does these and such like things, they "cannot but be holy, equitable, and worthy of himself." Hence all the invigorating influences of faith, and all the cheering consolations of hope, fade from the heart; and for a knowledge of God's *real* and *final* will and intentions towards us, we are dismissed from the sacred records of truth, and doomed to wait in trembling expectation, for their *future* development, in distant and doubtful events.⁵

⁵ All those, who are at all familiar with the details of the Calvinistic Controversy, must have observed, in some of its minor branches, a similar method adopted, to avoid the obvious force of Scripture phraseology.—For example; when texts, which announce in the plainest and most awful terms, the danger of falling away from grace, are brought to bear against the doctrine of "Final Perseverance;" we are too often told, that in reality, no such danger exists; and that these, and such-like expressions, are only used to alarm believers, and thereby excite

Thus, the obvious tendency of these two positions, is to abolish,—the one in natural, the other in revealed religion,—the notions so generally prevalent, that strict justice, equity, and righteousness,—according to the *usual meaning* of these words,—shall characterize all the awards, of a future judgment. And, if we look

them to greater vigilance and holiness. For, since it is decreed by divine power, to keep the Elect from perishing; it becomes divine wisdom, to adopt the means, suitable to such an end. Now, those threats and warnings, are the means; and being such, cannot be supposed to prove the existence of a danger, which they are intended to prevent. I shall not stop, to unravel the sophistry of this argument; but shall only remark, that this license of interpretation, evidently tends to nullify the *promises*, as well as the *warnings* of Scripture. For the credibility of each, rests on the *same* authority, viz. the testimony of God's word; which is not a whit more explicit and binding, in the one case, than in the other. So, that if it be supposed capable of deceiving us in the one, by threatening evils, that cannot by any contingency arrive, it is equally possible that in the other, it should hold forth blessings, that never shall be realized:—and both, may be equally intended, to effect nothing more, than the *present* advantage of the human race; by promoting the progress of virtue, and thereby ultimately producing that happiness, which would evidently accrue from its general practice. Such is the result of violating the right rule of reasoning so often alluded to, (which is not a less useful index to the contents of the Sacred Volume, than to those of the book of Nature,) by discarding the things best known to us, viz. the obvious and ordinary use of language; and by adopting in its room, doubtful speculations, about the *secret* decrees of God.

back to the position preceding these two, (which shall be referred to hereafter,) we shall find it representing this final scene, as nothing more, than a public exhibition and confirmation of God's now *secret* decrees; not a righteous distribution of rewards and punishments, retributory of virtue and vice.

It is true, that the generally prevailing abhorrence of injustice, implanted in our nature, compels the decretalists to affirm, that the reprobate are *justly* punished; though their *own explanations*, prove the contrary. This has been partly shown already, and will become more apparent from the following extracts. Zanchius' fourth and fifth positions concerning the Mercy of God are: "Pos. 4. There is no contradiction, whether real
" or seeming, between these two assertions, [1] that the
" blessings of grace and glory are peculiar to those
" whom God hath, in his decree of predestination, set
" apart for himself; and [2] that the Gospel declaration runs, that *whosoever willeth*, may take of the
" water of life freely. Since in the *first* place, none *can*
" will, or unfeignedly and spiritually desire a part in
" these privileges, but those whom God *previously*
" *makes* willing and desirous; and, secondly, that he
" gives this will to, and excites this desire in, *none but*
" his own *elect*."

"Pos. 5. Since ungodly men, who are totally and
" finally destitute of Divine grace, cannot know what
" this *Mercy* is, nor form any proper apprehension of
" it, much less by faith embrace and rely upon it for
" themselves; and since daily experience, as well as
" the scriptures of truth, teaches us, that God doth *not*
" open the eyes of the *reprobate*, as he doth the eyes
" of his elect, nor savingly enlighten their understand-

ings; it evidently follows that *his mercy was never*,
 “from the very first, *designed for them*, neither will
 “it be applied to them: but, both in designation and
 “application, is proper and peculiar to those only, who
 “are predestinated to life; as it is written, *the elec-*
tion hath obtained, and the rest were blinded.” Rom.
 xi. 7.

The whole of the foregoing reasoning;—as well as the forced meaning, put on the text with which it concludes;—proves, that, according to this scheme, the *reprobate* are *denied*, not only the physical power, but that will or wish of the heart, and enlightening of the understanding, without which—as is truly stated—it is impossible for any, to seek after or please God: or in other words to have any prospect of salvation. And notwithstanding (as we shall see hereafter,) this natural inability, this carnal blindness, this moral thralldom, in which they are bound up with the indissoluble chain of an irreversible decree; this pollution of the *soul*, which *it* neither created, nor can destroy; which it can neither escape, nor control; which adheres to it with desperate tenacity, from the cradle to the grave—its new born vestment, and its everlasting winding sheet—this fatal and unalterable corruption, is represented in itself and in its inevitable consequences; as *wilful*, obstinate, transgression; by which its wretched and afflicted possessor, becomes *justly* deserving, of eternal wrath and condemnation!!!

Thus also, Mr. Vaughan:—“The other part of
 “the damned community, he leaves to their ruin. It
 “is not consistent with the manifestation of his perfec-
 “tions, that he should exert his grace and power in

“delivering them: it is unto a more full manifestation
 “of his perfections, that his wrath abideth in them.
 “Conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity; accursed
 “from the womb by reason of their connexion
 “with and sin in Adam; and bringing an evil
 “nature into the world with them, they act that evil
 “nature: they have but to follow it, and every
 “imagination of the thoughts of their hearts will
 “be only evil continually; they need no stimulants,
 “the fountain of corruption overflows in them: but
 “the dispensations of God’s providence, the ineffectual
 “calls and restraints of his word and spirit, and the
 “arts of Satan, serve to excite, inflame, and mani-
 “fest the intensity of their depravity; until at length
 “having filled up the measure of their iniquities,
 “they are cut down as cumberers of the ground,
 “and in the day of wrath, and revelation of the
 “righteous judgment of God, they shall be burned
 “up with unquenchable fire.” (Vaughan’s Calvinistic
 Clergy. Lond. 1820, p. 130.)

Now, suppose we admit to the fullest extent,
 the depravity of human nature, as here described;
 (and I am not inclined to deny, that such must be
 its state, when *unregenerated and unassisted by divine
 grace*;) is it not plain, that it is utterly *impossible*
 for such beings,—either in *will*, or in deed—to love,
 or to serve God? with what face then, can it be said,
 that the *righteous judgment* of God, is manifested in
 decreeing them to everlasting punishment, for not will-
 ing or doing that, which it is both morally and physically
 impossible for them, to will, or to do? As well, might
 the just and righteous Governor of the universe, be
 represented, as summoning the *brute* creation into

judgment, and inflicting on them eternal vengeance, for not having; or not exercising *reason*; or for following the impulses of their ferocious instincts. Yet such, is the Predestinarian representation of the divine Justice. and by such arguments as these, do they think to exonerate the decrees of reprobation, from the charge of injustice.

Thus, the same author, in another place:—"God has ordained,—God does foresee,—that destruction of the wicked which he will consummate at the Last Day. But what is there unjust in all this, if their sin be *justly imputed*, if their actually possessed and manifested, if their own *freely chosen* course of action and *willed* works, be such as deserve God's wrath and condemnation? and these are just the conditions which I have asserted, and proved, to have their seat and operation in every reprobate sinner. It is not, for nothing, but for sin; it is not without any consideration of their moral delinquency, but because their moral delinquency is duly and deeply considered; that they receive their sentence." (Ibid. 275) Now, how can sin be justly imputed to those, who are confessedly unable, to do any thing else but sin? how can their character, "actually possessed and manifested," be ascribed to them as a *fault*; when it is that with which they were created, and in which they are doomed to remain? How can any conduct be called, "their own *freely chosen* course of action and *willed* works," when, they have no power, either by nature or by grace, to choose or adopt any other? and how can those be said, to "deserve God's wrath and condemnation," whose nature, appetites, and life, are exactly what He created and intended them to be, and

which, he rendered it impossible to be otherwise? Is such language as this,—are such arguments, such representations, accordant with the commonest, *best known*, most universally received notions, of justice, and mercy, and goodness? and if not; are we not warranted, by the rule laid down, in rejecting them without hesitation?

Thus again Calvin; “ Therefore if any one attack
 “ us with such an inquiry as this, why God has from
 “ the *beginning* predestinated some men to death, who
 “ not yet being brought into existence, could not yet
 “ deserve the sentence of death; we reply by asking
 “ them in return, what they suppose God owes to man
 “ if he chooses to *judge of him from his own nature*.
 “ As we are all corrupted by sin, we must necessarily
 “ be odious to God, and that not from tyrannical cruel-
 “ ty, but in the most equitable estimation of justice.
 “ If all whom the Lord predestinates to death are in
 “ their natural condition liable to the sentence of death,
 “ what injustice do they complain of receiving from
 “ him? Let all the sons of Adam come forward, let
 “ them all contend, and dispute with their Creator,
 “ because by his eternal providence they were previous-
 “ ly to their birth adjudged to endless misery. What
 “ murmur will they be able to raise against this vindi-
 “ cation, where God, on the other hand, shall call them
 “ to a review of themselves. If they have all been
 “ taken from a corrupt mass, it is no wonder that they
 “ are subject to condemnation. Let them not, there-
 “ fore, accuse God of injustice, if his eternal decree
 “ has destined them to death, to which they feel them-
 “ selves, whatever be their desire or aversion, sponta-
 “ neously led forward by their own nature. Hence ap-

“pears the perverseness of their disposition to murmur,
“because they intentionally suppress the cause of con-
“demnation, which they are constrained to acknow-
“ledge in themselves, hoping to excuse themselves,
“by charging it on God. But though *I ever so often*
“*admit God to be the author of it, WHICH IS PERFECTLY*
“CORRECT; yet this does *not abolish the guilt impressed*
“*on their consciences*, and from time to time recurring
“to their view.” (Ibid. 429.)

I shall not stop to remark, on the bold sophistry, and strange inconsistencies, of this remarkable passage. It is enough for my purpose, to observe, that our bounteous and merciful Creator, is here again represented, as first bringing the reprobate into existence, with a nature which leads them inevitably into sin; and then as punishing them eternally, for having that very nature, which he himself has bestowed, and for following those impulses, which his decree, has rendered it impossible to avoid. And yet, the existence of this miserable thralldom, is imputed to its wretched and fore-doomed slaves, as unpardonable guilt; and this imputation, is triumphantly adduced, as a vindication of Divine justice. No wonder, that the inventors of such arguments should deprecate every appeal, in this subject, to common sense and feeling; and strenuously forbid us, to judge of God's justice, by our ordinary notions. It were well, if they observed themselves, the same rule they desire to impose on others. For silence, were much better than such apologies. And they do little, to exalt the character of the Most High, by imputing to him conduct, which, if urged in vindication of any human sovereign, would be indignantly repelled, as the most insulting impeachment, of his equity and goodness.

Yet, it is by such justice as this, that the proceedings of final retribution, are to be regulated; and by such reasonings, the impartiality of its awards to be vindicated. Thus, in the position of Zanchius already alluded to, we are informed; that—

“Pos. 2. The Deity may be considered in a three-
 “fold point of view:—as *God* of all, as *Lord* of all
 “and as *Judge* of all,****(2) as *Lord*, or *Sovereign*
 “of all, he does as he will, (and has a most un-
 “questionable right to do so,) with his own; and
 “in particular, *fixes and determines the everlasting*
 “*state* of every individual person, as he sees fit.
 “It is essential to absolute sovereignty, that the sove-
 “reign have it in his power to dispose of those, over
 “whom his jurisdiction extends, just as he pleases,
 “without being accountable to any: and God whose
 “authority is unbounded, none being exempt from it;
 “may, with the strictest holiness and justice, love and
 “hate, elect or reprobate, save or destroy, any of his
 “creatures, whether human or angelic, according to
 “his own free pleasure and sovereign purpose. (3)
 “As *Judge* of all, he *ratifies* what he does as *Lord*,
 “by rendering to all according to their works; by
 “*punishing the wicked*, and rewarding those whom it
 “was his will to *esteem* righteous, and to *make* holy.”
 (Ibid. p. 32)

Again, “There is on the other hand, a Predesti-
 “nation of some particular persons to death. This
 “future death *they shall inevitably undergo*: for as
 “God will certainly *save* all whom he wills should be
 “saved, so he will as surely *condemn* all, whom he
 “wills shall be condemned; for he is the *Judge* of
 “the whole earth, whose decree shall stand, and from
 “whose sentence, there is no appeal. And his decree

“is this; that those, *i. e.* the non elect, who are
 “left under the guilt of final impenitence, unbelief,
 “and sin, shall go away into everlasting punishment;
 “the reprobate shall undergo this punishment *justly*
 “and on account of their sins.” (Ibid. 48, 49.)

Again, in proving the immutability of God’s decree, the following arguments are used. Arguments, which I quote, not only in confirmation of my statements, but, as examples of the Predestinarian method, of deducing the most confident conclusions, from that very aspect of the divine attributes, which is least intelligible to us; viz. their incomprehensible infinity.

“That the decrees of Election and Reprobation,
 “are *immutable* and irreversible.”

“Were this not the case, (1.) God’s *decree* would
 “be *precarious, frustrated, and uncertain*; and by
 “consequence, *no decree at all*. (2) His foreknowledge,
 “would be *wavering, indeterminate*, and liable to *dis-*
 “*appointment*; whereas, it always has its accomplish-
 “ment, and necessarily infers the certain futurity of the
 “thing or things foreknown. (4) If between the elect and
 “the reprobate, there were not a great gulph fixed, so that
 “*neither can be otherwise than they are*; then the
 “*will* of God, (which is the alone cause, why some
 “are chosen, and others are not,) would be rendered
 “inefficacious and of no effect. (5) Nor could the *Jus-*
 “*tice* of God stand, if he was to condemn the elect,
 “for whose sins he hath received ample satisfaction at
 “the hands of Christ; or if he was to save the repro-
 “bate, who are not interested in Christ as the elect
 “are, (6) The power of God, whereby the elect are
 “preserved from falling into a state of condemnation,

“and the wicked *held down* and *shut up* in a state of death, would be eluded, not to say utterly abolished. (7) Nor would God be *unchangeable*, if they, who were, once, the people of his love, could commence the objects of his hatred, or if the vessels of his wrath, could be saved with the vessels of his grace.” (Ibid. 56, 57.)

From all which passages, it is plain, that the elect are made, and kept holy, by irresistible grace, and then eternally *rewarded*, for *being* what they could *not avoid*. And that, the reprobate, *created* in, and *abandoned* to their sinful nature, are eternally *punished*, for this their *inevitable sinfulness*.—And the principle reasons, for attributing such revolting conduct, to our moral governor, are fearlessly and confidently adduced from the doctrine of *infinities*, about which, (as applied to the divine attributes,) we know next to nothing

To all which illegitimate and visionary speculations, sound philosophy, commencing from those things that we *feel* most sensibly, and *know* most clearly—those “primary laws of our constitution, which are to us the ultimate tests of truth and falsehood,”—and all those maxims of equity and justice, which conscience and reason approve—replies, with well-grounded confidence, that “the philosophy which terminates in such conclusions, must be vain philosophy;” since these conclusions have “so fearfully ominous an aspect, on the great doctrines of moral accountability, and the true nature of virtue and vice;” since, they excite in the mind, such “painful disquietude;” since, they are so “shocking to reason, and distressing to every pious feeling;” and since, none of them, can rest upon convictions

clearer and more indubitable, than does the contrast of them all, viz. that God is, (in the ordinary acceptation of the word,) truly merciful and just, and therefore totally incapable, of treating the creatures of his own creation, the works of his own hands, in a manner so unmerciful, and so unjust.

But all such common sense deductions, such common place reasonings, are lighter than air, in the estimation of those, who have scales to weigh Infinity, and levers to move Immensity. Accordingly, it is easily and triumphantly refuted, in the following daring and appalling picture of the last judgment.

“ Before I conclude this head, I will obviate a fallacious objection, very common in the mouths of our opponents. “ How ” say they, “ is the doctrine of *reprobation* reconcileable with the doctrine of a *future judgment* ? ” To which I answer, that they need no pains to reconcile these two, since they are so far from interfering with each other, that one follows from the other, and the *former* renders the *latter* absolutely necessary. Before the judgment of the great day, Christ does not so much act as Judge of his creatures, but as their absolute Lord and Sovereign. From the first creation, to the final consummation, of all things ; he does in consequence of his own eternal and *immutable purpose* ; (as a Divine person,) graciously *work in and on his own elect*, and permissively *harden* the reprobate. But when all the transactions of providence and grace are wound up in the last day ; he will then *properly sit as Judge* ; and openly *publish*, and solemnly *ratify*, if I may so say, his everlasting *decrees*, by receiving

“ the elect, body and soul, into glory, and by passing sentence on the non-elect (*not for their having done what they could not help, but*) for their wilful ignorance of divine things, and their obstinate unbelief, for their omissions of moral duty and for their repeated iniquities and transgressions.” (P. 87.)

The scene of final Judgment, according to its Predestinarian characteristics, is here so distinctly delineated; that (after what has been already said,) it is unnecessary to dwell on its revolting features, or to heighten its awful colouring. Nor can the saving clauses, and “qualifying epithets,”—introduced to quiet the secret misgivings of its advocates—reconcile our eyes to the fearful spectacle, or conceal from our observation, the fearful lineaments of that *fictitious* character, for whom, they would dethrone from his office and his attributes, the God of Mercy, Equity, and Truth—the Saviour of the world, and the Prince of Peace. All the maxims of moral government, of probationary discipline and retributive justice, are here fearlessly violated; while Reason, Conscience, and Piety, shocked and bewildered, turn from the sickening sight, with shuddering indignation.

Now if this be the case—if it be true, that such representations as the foregoing, are revolting to all our unprejudiced feelings—repugnant to all our unbiassed convictions—in short, opposed to all our practical and unsophisticated conceptions, of Divine wisdom and goodness; then, since they thus contradict the things, with which we are *best* acquainted—the premises of which we are most capable of judging; they ought to be unhesitatingly rejected, as the visionary inventions, of an unfounded and vain philosophy.

Under this head, it is proper to take notice, of the argument generally deduced from God's *Sovereignty*—or *Supremacy*—or *secret will*, to get over, the preceding just and established methods of reasoning as to the divine attributes. To enter into the subject at large, would be incompatible with the limits of an appendix. I shall, therefore, only try the argument by the test so often alluded to.

Let then this proposition be laid down: that *the will of God, is sovereign, just, and right*; and no pious or humble mind, will for a moment, refuse its assent. But here again, the question recurs; how, (exclusive of revelation,) ⁶ are we to ascertain, what that will is? how, are we to become acquainted, with his mode of governing us, and his final intentions toward us? In answer to this question, sound philosophy directs us to content ourselves, with such humble attempts, as are suited to

⁶ Revelation itself, can be of little use to us in this inquiry, if we admit the following strange position of Zanchius;—

Pos. 2. “Although the will of God, considered in itself, “is simply *one and the same*; yet, in condescension to the “present capacities of men, the divine will, is very properly distinguished into *secret* and *revealed*. Thus, it “was his *revealed* will, that Pharaoh should *let* the Israelites “go; that Abraham should *sacrifice* his son; and that Peter “should *not deny* Christ; but as was *found by the event*, it was “his *secret* will that Pharaoh should *not* let Israel go, that “Abraham should *not* sacrifice Isaac, and that Peter should “*deny* his Lord.” (ut. supra. p.4.) According to this reasoning, the existence of a revelation is of little value, in enabling us to ascertain, what are the *real* intentions—the *secret* will of God. They may be widely different, nay, totally opposite, to what he has most solemnly announced;

our *actual* nature and circumstances. Rightly judging, that those things, which providence has enabled us to understand best, were designed to be, the stepping stones to all further knowledge ; it turns our attention, to those *practical* indications of his *Will*, which *He himself* has traced, on the moral phenomena around us and within us. The predestinarian scheme, on the contrary, despising all these, commences at once, with speculations, concerning the infinite, incomprehensible, immutable

and we must wait patiently, till the *event* ascertain, whether his *secret* and *revealed* will, coincide. It may, therefore, be his *revealed* will to pardon sins, on faith and repentance: but it may be his *secret* will, not to pardon them at all. It may be his *revealed* will, to lead all the elect, through holiness to happiness: but it may be his *secret* will, to allow some of them to fall finally, and to be ruined eternally. It may be his *revealed* will, to reward the righteous and punish the wicked—to accomplish the longings of the faithful, and realize the forebodings of the guilty: but the *event* may prove it to be his *secret* will, to baffle the vanity of human calculations, by disappointing the best founded hopes; and to magnify the glory of his grace, by exalting to honor, those who least anticipated and least deserved it. In short, on this supposition, his *revealed* will, can be no guide to us whatever. Such, are the perplexities, to which, those reduce themselves, who will not be content, to interpret Scripture, by the standard of our ordinary conceptions. It were easy to show, that this position of Zanchius, originated in *his* views of the *infinite* and *immutable* nature of the *divine will*, and in his desire to reconcile those views, with the manifestly conflicting testimony, of the Scripture facts, to which he alludes; and which, are matters of common sense, not of metaphysical discussion.

nature of the Divine Will: and of course, entangles itself in endless difficulties.

On these, it would be tedious to dwell, in this place. The most important thing to remark, is, the unphilosophical and dogmatical manner, in which its advocates force the most stubborn facts, to square with their system; and silence, without attempting to explain, the most obvious objections brought against it, by reason and conscience. For, when from their metaphysical reveries, anti-predestinarians appeal to common sense, and expose the absurdities of their inferences, by proving their opposition, to some of the most evident, and most generally received notions, of Justice, Mercy, &c.; the general method, of *evading* the force, of such rational and decisive objections, is, to resolve them all, into the *Sovereignty* of God.

Thus, a late author, treading in the footsteps of Calvin, states as fundamental truths;—"This favoured
 "portion or remnant being so delivered, restored, and
 "brought to everlasting felicity in Christ, by an exercise of wise and righteous *sovereignty* on the part of
 "God, whereby he chooses to himself a people out of
 "this universally condemned race, to the rejection and
 "exclusion of the rest, for *reasons secret to us*; but of
 "which the furtherance of his own glory is, as in every
 "other appointment word and work of God, the ultimate and determinate object." (Vaughan's Calvinistic Clergy, Lond. 1820. P. 62.) "Lastly, we have here
 "God's *Sovereignty* asserted, both in the acceptance
 "of the saved and in the rejection of the lost: the
 "saved being brought to everlasting felicity in Christ
 "through the *electing grace* of God; the lost inheriting

“ their portion of everlasting woe, through his most
“ awful but most *just decree* of reprobation.”

“ Not only is the constitution of Redemption in gen-
“ eral of God’s arrangement, and the Fall which gave
“ occasion to it, of God’s ordinance ; but to his coun-
“ selled *Will*, as its *ultimate source*, is to be traced the
“ origin, progress and termination of the work of resto-
“ ration in every restored individual ; and to the same
“ counselled *Will* as its ultimate source, that inflexible
“ adherence to sin and apostacy which is found in the
“ *justly* condemned unbeliever.” (Ibid 128.)

Here, every difficulty is resolved into God’s *Sovereignty*, or his counselled *Will*. Now, sovereignty is not—properly speaking—itself an attribute, but a prerogative. It is the right to rule, which is proved to belong to God, as a consequence of his Divine attributes. But if these attributes, have been legitimately deduced from the *things best known* to us, it is impossible, that the prerogative founded on them, can contradict its premises, or militate with the proper notions of those attributes. But, if these attributes have been obtained, by means of abstract speculations, concerning the doctrine of Infinites, then, the Sovereignty founded thereon, must partake of their illegitimate character ; and therefore, be open to all the former objections. What then does the appeal to Sovereignty, on this supposition, amount to ? Why to nothing more, than a skilful, but still, a sophistical evasion. It is merely an attempt, to escape the objections, urged against the doctrine of Infinites in one shape, by appealing to the very same doctrine, in another shape. It is only *masking* the former scheme, with a new face and a new name, to impose on unwary inquirers.

I say this, on the supposition, that Predestinarians would condescend—after thus appealing to it—to explain

what they mean by sovereignty. For in this case, the question would be open to further investigation. ⁷ But in point of fact, it will be found, that they adopt a much shorter and surer plan. Some of the extracts already quoted, and some yet to be adduced, show, that their method is, *first*, to answer every objection against Predestination, by an appeal to the Divine Prerogative; and then to forbid us to examine, or try *their assertions* about this Prerogative, by *any standard* whatever. Thus, over all the absurdities and deformities of their system, they fling the cloak of divine sovereignty, and then denounce, under pain of sacrilege, any attempt to draw it aside, or to expose the imposition.

Here, we have in the first place, a *Petitio Principii*. For, the very point in dispute is, whether irrespective Predestination be the system of moral government, *actually adopted* by God, in the exercise of his undoubted prerogative. And the palpable objections against this scheme, are insisted on, not with the profane intention, of attributing to *God*, any thing wrong; but, on the contrary, to *prevent* the imputation to *Him*, of so absurd and shocking a scheme. To answer these objections—which, if just, are abundantly decisive that such *cannot* be God's system—by resolving them into displays of Divine Sovereignty, is, in other words, to assert, that *it is* his system; which is begging the very question in debate. In the next place, it may be observed, that it is evident, that—according to this method

⁷ Modern Calvinism, *does* entertain this inquiry; and that, in the way, of fair discussion. (See Dr. Williams' and Mr. Gilbert's works, already referred to.) But, to canvass their views, would require a separate treatise; and could not be attempted in an Appendix.

of arguing—any line of conduct, however atrocious or revolting, may, with equal justice, be asserted of the Deity. —For, it is only necessary, boldly to maintain,—notwithstanding whatever objections, may appear to the contrary—that such proceedings *are* displays of unquestioned and unquestionable sovereignty; and then, to demand of us unhesitating approbation, and silent submission, under the guilt of rebellion, and the penalty of eternal displeasure. Thus, at once, is the system established, and all opposition overruled,—all difficulties are exploded,—all inconsistencies reconciled, and all absurdities covered and concealed, in the mysterious envelopment, of an undefined and undefinable sovereignty.

Thus Calvin, “Foolish mortals enter into many
“contentions with God, as though they could arraign
“him to plead to their accusations. In the first place
“they inquire, by what right the Lord is angry with
“his creatures who had not provoked him by any
“*previous* offences; for that, to devote to destruction
“whom he pleases, is more like the caprice of a tyrant
“than the lawful sentence of a judge; that men have
“reason, therefore, to expostulate with God, if they
“are predestinated to eternal death, without any de-
“merit of their own, merely by his sovereign will. If
“such thoughts ever enter into the minds of pious men,
“they will be sufficiently enabled to break their violence
“by this one consideration; how exceedingly presump-
“tuous it is only to inquire into the *causes* of the di-
“vine will; which is in fact, and is justly entitled to be,
“the cause of every thing that exists. For if it has any
“cause, then there must be something antecedent on
“which it depends; which it is impious to suppose.
“For the will of God is the highest rule of justice; so
“that what he wills must be considered just, for this

“very reason, because he wills it. When it is inquired, “therefore, why the Lord did so, the answer must be, “because he would. But if you go further, and ask, “why he so determined? you are in search of something “greater and higher than the will of God, which can “never be found. Let human temerity, therefore, desist from seeking that which is not, lest it should fail “of finding that which is. This will be a sufficient restraint to any one disposed to reason with reverence “concerning the *secrets* of God. Against the audaciousness of the impious, who are not afraid to rail “against God, the Lord will sufficiently defend himself “by his own justice, without any vindication by us, “when, depriving their consciences of every subterfuge, “he shall convict them and bind them with a sense of “their guilt. Yet we espouse not the notion of the “Romish theologians concerning the absolute and arbitrary power of God, which; on account of it’s profaneness, deserves our detestation. We represent not “God as lawless, who is a law to himself; but we deny “that he is liable to be called to any account; we also “deny, that we are *proper judges*, deciding in this “cause according to *our own apprehension*.” (Inst. vol. II. p. 427, 8.)

The ingenuity of this defence shows, that Calvinism possessed in its master, an advocate of no ordinary skill. He puts into the mouths of his adversaries arguments, objections, and profane railings, that never entered their minds in reference to *God Himself*, or to any system proved to be *His*: and which, are never adduced by them, except to show, that the system, to which they are justly imputable, *cannot* be *His*. Thus, he flip-pantly identifies *their* cause, with that of contumacy and rebellion: and claims for his own, the *credit* of de-

fending the Divine Prerogative. Having, thus boldly, *taken for granted* the truth of his own system, as that of God himself; it is easy to assert, the falsehood of all opposed to it, and the impiety of all objections to it.

But in this, he misrepresents, both the end and arguments of his opponents. For which of them, presumes to inquire, into the *causes* of God's *real* will? Who finds fault, with any part, of what is *proved* to be his *pleasure*? Who set themselves up as judges of his *actual* conduct? Certainly, not those, whose very *first* inquiry is; what *is* God's will: what *is* his pleasure: what *is* his method of moral government: and, who pursue this inquiry, by humble and close attention, to the traces *He* has left of *himself*, in moral phenomena? If the *reasonings* of any, lead to this presumption—for, I would gladly acquit the *feelings*, of every pious Christian, of such an imputation—it is the reasonings of those, who, neglecting these manifest indications of God's will—these exhibitions which he has given of himself, imagine, that their pigmy intellects can scale the throne of omnipotence—develop the nature of the divine volitions—unfold the character of his decrees, and thence deduce a demonstrable system—a system, which is to comprehend in it's precise and logical conclusions, the dealings of Providence, not merely with men, but with angels—the destinies, not of this earth alone, but of all created worlds. For such, are the unlimited sphere and operations, of *eternal, immutable, irresistible, irrespective decrees*. Which of these two modes of investigation, is the more suitable to our situation and capacities,—more consonant to the means and opportunities, which Providence has furnished us for such an inquiry; in short, which is the more reasonable and philosophical; the application of the test I have laid down, places beyond a doubt.

Pursuing the same style of reasoning, and in the same spirit, it is no wonder that Predestinarians should meet objections, with that bold strain of gratuitous assertion, that characterizes their entire system; and in the absence of a more legitimate reply, should think it a sufficient answer, to *re-assert* the truth of their own views, and the consequent futility of all opposition thereto. But, when it is objected to any hypothesis of divine government, that part of it is incompatible with moral excellence; there are only two legitimate answers: either, that such conduct, considered in itself, is *not* incompatible with moral excellence; or, that if it be, it does *not* belong to the hypothesis in question. But neither of these, do Predestinarians adopt. They admit, that the conduct objected to, *is* a part of their system; but argue, that since *their* system is *God's* system, this conduct, however apparently unworthy, must be really worthy of him. That is, they first beg the question in debate, viz. The truth of their system, or the propriety of ascribing it to God: and then, of course, no objection can for a moment avail against it, any more than against God himself. On the contrary, every objection is—by this short cut—at once convicted, of profaneness and blasphemy. Thus we find Calvin reasoning as follows:—

“ They further object, were they not, by the decree of
“ God, antecedently predestinated to that corruption which
“ is now stated as the cause of condemnation. When
“ they perish in their corruption, therefore, they only suf-
“ fer the punishment of that misery into which, in conse-
“ quence of his predestination, Adam fell, and precipitat-
“ ed his posterity with him. Is he not unjust, therefore,
“ in treating his creatures with such cruel mockery? I
“ confess, indeed, that all the descendants of Adam fell

“ by the Divine will into that miserable condition in which
 “ they are now involved ; and this is what I asserted from
 “ the beginning, that we must always *return at last* to
 “ the *sovereign determination of God's will, the cause* of
 “ which is hidden in himself. But it follows not, there-
 “ fore, that God is liable to reproach. For we will an-
 “ swer them thus in the language of Paul : “ O Man,
 “ who art thou that repliest against God ? Shall the
 “ thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast
 “ thou made me thus ?” (Ibid 429.)

Here, Calvin fairly states an argument, so obvious and unanswerable, as to decide any unprejudiced mind, on rejecting with abhorrence, the imputation to God, of such an hypothesis of moral government. Now, let it be remembered, that the objection is advanced, *not* as a reproach against God, *for acting thus* ; but to show, that he *never did, never could have acted thus* ; because, such conduct would be incompatible, with every rational notion, that we can form of the Divine Perfections. In short, the objection is brought, to prove the *falsehood* of the Predestinarian hypothesis, by showing it's injustice. Calvin, evidently, felt it's force ; and how does he answer it ? As usual, by a *Petitio Principii*. He *assumes*, at once, the *truth* of the system, *against* the truth of which the objection is brought ; and then tells us, that because it *is* true, we must give up the objection. He takes for *granted*, as the result of the *sovereign will* of a just God, conduct, which has been denied of him, because of it's injustice ; and then, on the ground of this assumption, commands us to receive it as *his*, and to acquiesce in it as just. He boldly *asserts*, the very thing in debate, and then, on the strength of this assertion, forbids all further discussion. As if his assertion, could convert hypothesis into fact, and make that to be true, which reason proves to be false.

No doubt, could it be fairly proved, that such a scheme were the result of God's sovereign will, every pious mind would at once submit. But, so far is this, from being the case, that these very objections, (I speak only of natural religion) are themselves pregnant with proofs, that such a scheme should *not* be *imputed* to Divine Sovereignty; since, they show, that it is opposed to those things that we *know best*—to all the plainest maxims of moral government, all the dictates of unbiassed reason, and all the suggestions of enlightened conscience.

“ I say, with Augustine, that the Lord created those
 “ who, he certainly fore knew, would fall into destruction,
 “ and that this was actually so *because* he *willed it*: but
 “ of his *will* it belongs not to us to demand the reason,
 “ which we are incapable of comprehending; nor is it
 “ reasonable that the *Divine will* should be made the
 “ subject of controversy with us, which, whenever it is
 “ discussed, is only another name for the highest rule of
 “ justice. Why then is any question started concern-
 “ ing injustice, when justice is evidently conspicuous?”
 (Ibid. 431.)

Here again, the same line of sophistical defence is pursued. Irrespective decrees, against the imputation of which to Deity, all the objections of their manifest injustice have been adduced, are at once *asserted*, to result from the Divine will; and then—the very point in debate being thus taken for granted—all further controversy is, very judiciously prohibited. For, since it costs no more than an unsupported assertion, to over-
 leap every impediment, and identify these decrees with that Divine and sovereign will, which is only “ another name for the highest rule of justice;” how, can any

question be “started concerning injustice, when justice is evidently conspicuous?”

Now, I would sincerely ask Predestinarians, how can there be the least chance of pursuing inquiry, to any satisfactory result, if such a system of disputation be adhered to? How can we investigate difficulties, discuss objections, elicit truth;—how, in short, can we reason at all with those, who have so ready a reply to every argument;—who can be content, to beg the question, in answer to every objection;—who can rest satisfied with their own assertions, as abundant proof of every position?

Again, I would beg of them to consider, whether it be fair reasoning, to erect themselves into infallible judges and critical expounders—as in matters of the most common place knowledge—of the hidden nature of God’s “*secret decrees*,” confidently and dogmatically—unfolding, describing, and defining them, as irrespective, immutable, irresistible: while, at the same moment, they denounce every examination of them by their opponents, as presumptuous and impious attempts, to penetrate and explain that, which is infinite, unknown, incomprehensible.

Thus Mr. Vaughan when he wishes to meet his adversary’s argument—deduced from the goodness of God—against irrespective reprobation reasons thus: “Sir, God is *the Good*. But do we know enough of God to know that his goodness cannot consist with punishment? even with eternal punishment? even with punishment eternally ordained?” (Ut sup. 271.) Here, when an obvious objection of common sense is to be met,—and to be silenced because it cannot be answered,—the utmost modesty is affected; our

ignorance of God, is set up, as a bar to further investigation; and a demand of submission is made; when there should be, either an attempt to explain the difficulty, or a candid admission of its force and importance. Yet, in a few sentences afterwards, when it suits his own purposes, all this timidity vanishes; and he reasons about the *elements* of the Divine mind, about their opposition, agreement, decree, &c. as confidently, and as definitively, as if for him, the veil had been removed from Infinity, and all the hidden mysteries of Deity disclosed.

“ Speaking after the *manner of men* “ God has no
 “ pleasure in the death of him that dieth;” “ he is not
 “ willing that any should perish;” “ he would rather
 “ that they should be converted and live:” that is
 “ there are *simple elements in his mind* which would lead
 “ him to that determination. But there are *also* simple
 “ elements in his mind, which lead him to *another* deter-
 “ mination; and the *result* is, the *former* are *overcome*
 “ of the *latter*; the *counsel* of his *will*, his *decision*, his
 “ *decree*, is against mercy !!!” Those, who fancy, that
 the volitions of Deity, can be thus familiarly scanned, by
 mortal eyes, may content themselves with such specula-
 tions. For my own part, I firmly believe, that (exclu-
 sive of Revelation) we have no other means of knowing
 them, but by following that plain practical philosophical
 method, the importance and propriety of which, I have
 endeavoured to establish. And when that fails us—and
 both it, and every other method, must fail us, some
 where short of Infinity—it seems to me, to be both
 more safe and more reverential, to stay our footsteps,
 in distant and silent adoration of that light, to which
 no man can approach; than to fancy, that by holding up
 our little torch of reason, we can add to its lustre, or

increase its glories. It seems to me, that we should more consult for the honor of the Most High, by acknowledging our littleness, and by implicitly practising what he has enabled us to know, than by surrendering his sacred Name and attributes, to the profanation of every wild reverie, and groundless hypothesis.

On the whole, this appeal to the sovereignty of God seems to me, to be nothing more, than the last refuge of those, who seek, under its shelter, to evade the force of an argument, which they cannot answer. For, their *opponents* are equally ready to admit, that the Will of God, is *sovereign, right, and true*. But how does this admission affect the questions that still remain to be answered—*What is the will of God—and how is it to be ascertained?* How does this admission *prove*, that *it is* the will of God, to govern by irrespective decrees? In truth, when *fairly* stated, it leaves the subject, just as much open to discussion as before. But their *manner* of using this appeal, has, by the preceding examples, been shown to be any thing but legitimate reasoning. Sometimes it offers a pretended explanation of difficulties, while it is only the flimsy covering, of a hardy *Petitio Principii*. Sometimes, on the contrary, it shrouds in impenetrable darkness, the most dreadful and revolting dogmas, and then commands the trembling inquirer, to bow, to believe, and to adore.⁷

⁷ I speak not here of modern Calvinism, which by defining the meaning of divine sovereignty, &c. opens the field to fair and legitimate discussion. (See the works of Dr. Williams, and Mr. Gilbert already referred to.) And though I cannot agree with it in opinion, I see the possibility, of such a discussion ultimately leading, to some

Sometimes, forbidding us to *reason* upon ordinary principles, concerning the *incomprehensible* attributes of Deity, it resolves them all, into his still *more* incomprehensible sovereignty. While at others, it proposes this very sovereignty itself, as the proper source, from which they should all be deduced, defined, demonstrated.

The divine sovereignty seems, in short, to possess in their hands, a kind of talismanick power, of revealing, what they acknowledge to be inscrutable,—of demonstrating, what they represent as incapable of investigation,—of exploring, what they describe to us, as situated beyond the limits of human research. Surely, when they resolve all the attributes, and all *difficulties* about them, into the sovereignty of God; and at the same time tell us, that this sovereignty is *incomprehensible*; the only fair conclusion from their own premises is that *they* should not any longer pretend to reason about, either it, or them. But—however seemly and consistent *their* silence might be, after such admissions—they cannot, with any appearance of modesty or reasonableness, require, that we should receive at *their* hands, a system, erected by *themselves*, upon this very *sovereignty*; that is, built up by admitted incompetency, and bottomed on acknowledged ignorance.

We may then, safely rely on the conclusion—as far as Natural Religion is concerned—that we must rest contented, with those notions of the moral attributes, which are legitimately derivable from moral phenomena, by the exercise of reason and conscience. And further,

useful result; a possibility I cannot discover, in the dictatorial statements of high Predestinarianism.

that no suppositions, obviously at variance with these principles—which are the *best known* to us—can be admitted, in explanation of God's moral government. This at least, we may be certain of, that, if we cannot attain knowledge in this way, there is none other whatever, in which we can acquire it. Any thing else, must be vain conjecture, and groundless speculation; and can only serve, to perplex and bewilder, even the most cautious, and the most acute.

I am aware of the various answers, that are generally urged, against such reasoning as the preceding. It will, I think, be mostly found, that they resolve themselves, into *fresh* deductions from the same incomprehensible divine nature, against the speculative misconceptions of which, all my previous arguments have been directed. To endeavour, therefore, to controvert such deductions, on their *own ground*, would be, to commit the very error that I deprecate. It would be, to overstep the natural boundaries of practicable and attainable knowledge, and to launch forth with predestinarians, into the visionary regions of abstraction.

For example, it has been said; if God's love to his elect, be not unalterable, what becomes of his unchangeableness? If his approbation be affected by men's actions, not fixed by his own irrespective decree, what becomes of his Independance? with many other similar statements. To all which, I answer, that these are the very *speculations*, concerning the Nature of the Deity; which, finite intellects can never venture to take as premises, without involving the results, in endless confusion. A little calm consideration will, I think, show, that the difficulties contained in the foregoing state-

ments, are introduced into them, *together* with that unknown unmanageable quantity—Infinity—which confounds every calculation in which it is involved; and which must ever preclude the hope, of eliciting, in such questions, a definite and satisfactory result.

To try this point fairly, let us divest the question of that *one term*, and observe, whether the difficulties will not also disappear. Let us, for example, suppose an angel or archangel, commissioned to govern some sphere, peopled with beings exactly like ourselves. Let us imagine him, to be exalted far above all human infirmities—to be benevolent and powerful, wise and holy—to be every thing, in short, but infinite. Our reliance on a government conducted by such a being, would be deservedly great. We should expect it to be characterized, by the constant reprobation of vice, and the steady patronage of virtue. We should hope to see such a Governor “a terror to evil works,” but to the righteous, “a Minister of God for good.”

First, then, as to his *immutability*. What could we suppose *unchangeable*, in such a being, but this very excellence of character; or in other words, his unalterable love of the virtuous—his inflexible disapprobation of the wicked? Consequently, if any individuals of either of those classes, should pass over to the the opposite, by a radical exchange of principles and conduct, the very *unchangeableness* of the Sovereign’s character, must lead him to regard such altered beings, with altered feelings. Unless, it be pretended, that his undeviating love for virtue, must perpetuate his esteem for those, who outrage and forsake it—that his unwavering impartiality in the distribution of his favours, must ensure

to the guilty the reward of innocence—and, that his faithfulness to his *faithful* servants, must pledge him, to patronize the unfaithful, and to applaud the disobedient—to countenance the traitor in his treason, and to encourage the disloyal in his rebellion.

In such a notion of *unchangeableness*, we have, a blind and obstinate adherence, to capricious and unmerited preferences, substituted in place, of a steady regard to unbending truth; and we have him dignified with the title of *immutable*, who is fickle in every thing but favouritism, and constant to every thing but principle.

In the *next* place, as to *independance*. A Governor, such as the one first supposed, would be considered, not only wise, but truly independant, who possessed power, to pursue with unvarying determination, the advancement of truth and virtue, by setting up, or by putting down his subjects, as they conformed to, or revolted against his views. Whereas, the principles and regulations of that Governor, must be truly dependant on the conduct of his *favourites*, who *must* lavish on *them*, unalterable love and undiminished patronage, whether they be worthy or unworthy—faithful or treacherous—holy or polluted. For it is evident, that he must, to this end, ever shape his views of rectitude, and continually alter his enactments, so as to meet with approbation their changing conduct: or else, he must abandon even the semblance of independant Sovereignty, and permit his laws to be violated in principle, and their sanctions to be nullified in practice. The only remedy, I can imagine to be suggested for this difficulty, is the supposition, that the governor should so manage, as to render it *impossible* for his favourites, *ever* to transgress.

Not to notice in this place, the many absurdities arising out of this hypothesis, such as, its reducing moral beings, to mere machines—destroying their capabilities for virtue and vice—removing the foundations of all responsibility—and, annihilating the very nature and meaning, of rewards and punishments: I need only observe, that this hypothesis, however it might suit some unknown angelic race, is perfectly inapplicable, to the case of frail and sinful mortals. For it is not pretended, that any of them are, in fact, thus permanently and perfectly impeccable. Much less, is such an hypothesis consistent with that peculiar scheme, one of whose essential tenets is, that the *elect* themselves, even *after* their regeneration and conversion, may *fall foully, though not finally*.

Similar considerations might be applied to show, in the case I have supposed, the opposition of other Predestinarian dogmas, to all the most obvious and best established maxims of moral government. It is, however, most to my purpose, to remark, that all this reasoning, is perfectly plain and undeniable, with respect to any *finite* Sovereign. And the more exalted we suppose him to be, the nearer we imagine him to approximate to Divine excellence, the more evident is its force and conclusiveness. Hence, we are warranted in saying, that whatever difficulty, may be connected with the *application* of similar reasoning, to the *Divine* government, must arise entirely out of the *new term*—Infinity—introduced into the question for the first time, by the very *attempt* to make such an application.

Hence we find the following arguments—if they can so be called—continually resorted to, by those who

fancy, that they can reason logically and conclusively, from the infinite and incomprehensible nature of Deity. “The decrees of election and reprobation are *immutable* and irreversible. Were this not the case, (1) God’s decree would be *precarious, frustrable, and uncertain*; and by consequence, *no* decree at all. (2) His *fore-knowledge* would be *wavering, indeterminate, and liable to disappointment*: (5) If, between the elect and reprobate, there was not a great gulph fixed, so that neither can be otherwise than they are; then the *will* of God (which is the alone cause why some are chosen and others are not) would be rendered inefficacious and of no effect. (6) The *power* of God (whereby the elect are preserved from falling into a state of condemnation, and the wicked held down and shut up in a state of death) would be eluded, not to say utterly abolished. (7) Nor would God be *unchangeable*, if they, who were, once, the people of his love, could commence the object of his hatred; or if the vessels of his wrath could be saved with the vessels of grace.” (Zanch. ut supra p. 56.)

All the foregoing conclusions are evidently opposed to those, which, in the preceding hypothesis, I have shown must result, from our *ordinary* notions of justice, mercy, and moral government. And, a single glance is sufficient to show, that all their imaginary conclusiveness, depends on the supposition, that the doctrine of infinites—which is introduced into them, and not into the others—is, a legitimate and intelligible foundation of argument. Those who think that it is, and, that their finite capacities, are adequate to the task, may fancy that they have succeeded in resolving these endless difficulties—in unfolding to mortal eyes, the chart of the Divine mind—

in determining the nature and causes, of the Divine volitions—in fettering infinity, with the bonds of human demonstration—and in subjugating immensity, to the application of rule and compass. For my part, there seems to me, to be so little, that is satisfactory or conclusive, in *any* reasonings of the kind, that, although I think it would be easy, to deduce opposite conclusions, from the very same premises, yet I should yield to them—if unsupported by better arguments—as little confidence, as to the other.

Thus, the difficulties that may arise, from the *apparent* opposition, of such abstract reasonings, to our *ordinary* notions, so far from constituting any real ground of uneasiness, or of dissatisfaction with the latter, ought naturally to be expected, when men depart, from the sound rule of philosophizing, and indulge in unlicensed speculation. They may, therefore, be a just warning to us, not to extend our inquiry, to that which we cannot comprehend; but, they afford no reason whatever, for requiring us, to give up that which we can comprehend,—which we can learn from those things that we *do* know; and which Providence has placed within our reach, for that very purpose. Above all, they afford no just ground, for requiring us to sacrifice this practical knowledge, in deference to doctrines, deduced from those very incomprehensible difficulties themselves; and presented to us, in the most fearful and ominous form, (not, as being arrayed against other speculations equally useless, but) as opposed, to the most obvious conclusions, of sound philosophy, and practical religion.

Whenever, therefore, such difficulties as the foregoing, are employed to force upon us conclusions, revolt-

ing to conscience, piety, and common sense; every man of plain understanding, is, I conceive, at liberty, to *decline altogether, so unprofitable a controversy*. He should, in the spirit, both of *practical* humility, and of sound philosophy, regard the difficulties themselves, as the natural consequences of his inability to penetrate the Divine nature; while, he may justly meet the portentous conclusions, attempted to be deduced from them, with that *instinctive rejection*, which they naturally excite, in all unprejudiced minds; and which is the best possible proof, that they stand opposed, to those “pri-
 “mary laws of our constitution, which to us, are the
 “ultimate tests of truth and falshood.” Now, whether the doctrines of absolute irrespective Predestination, be, as I have endeavoured to show, thus repugnant to our understandings—revolting to our feelings—and, contradictory to our most established notions of moral government—is a question, that must be determined, by the verdict, of the *majority* of unprejudiced, pious, and reflecting men. The appeal therefore, is (in Natural Theology) to conscience, to common sense, and to practical religion. And to those tribunals I have no fear of submitting the decision.

The preceding remarks may serve to show, how little reason there is, in an objection, that is frequently brought by Predestinarians, against the *popular* arguments of their opponents: viz. that “*eloquence* has
 “been often called to the aid of the Arminian, but that
 “the Calvinist has generally contented himself with
 “*simple argument*.” This means, in truth, that the Calvinist generally confines himself, to metaphysical disquisitions: while, his opponent appeals, to common sense, and to enlightened conscience—to the moral feel-

ings—the virtuous emotions—the instinctive principles, and intuitive convictions, of pious and reflecting men.

Now, these being the things, that are *best known* to us—that are most sensibly felt—most distinctly understood by the bulk of mankind: may be considered, as implanted in their nature, and “written in their hearts,”—by a wise and gracious Providence—to the end, that those who “have not the “law,” should be “a law unto themselves.”⁸ As such, therefore, they must ever be regarded—in Natural Religion—as “the ultimate “tests, of truth and falsehood.” Hence those arguments—thus detractingly styled, eloquent, popular, and declamatory—which consist, of honest and direct appeals, to these moral principles, convictions, and feelings; instead of suffering in our estimation, on account of such charges are thereby proved to be—according to the rule laid down—the most philosophical and satisfactory, that can be adduced, on this subject. Whereas, those metaphysical abstractions, which refuse the application of such tests, should ever be regarded with strong suspicion, as harbouring some latent opposition, to the truth of moral phenomena, and to the nature of things; which, otherwise, they would not pretend, to despise and reject.

VI. I have already observed, that although predestination does not pretend, to take its premises from observation, or experience, yet, its advocates sometimes appeal to *partial* views of facts, to corroborate their speculative conclusions. The length to which, this appendix has already extended, prevents me from alluding to more

⁸ Rom. ii. 14, 15.

than one of these. And I select it, not for its ingenuity or real weight—for it seems to me deficient in both,—but because of the strange and undue importance, which I perceive attached to it, both in open controversy, and in private discussion, by the most excellent and pious, of modern Calvinists. It has been resorted to by Calvin himself, and by several other writers on that side; ⁹ but I prefer giving it, in the words of one, whose name is at present deservedly high, in the estimation of the religious world.

“ Let us advert,” says this author, “ to the *analogies* “ of the *human* system: Is not the principle of election “ to special advantages, visible on every side? Do we “ not find it in the various climates and temperature of “ the earth? and in the combinations of political in- “ stitutions? Why are the ravages of disease, and the “ perils of climate, connected with one country, and “ not with another? Why is the power of despotism “ in the hand of an European, to oppress the victim “ of weakness in the Asiatic or African? Why are the “ refinements of science, prevalent in one quarter of “ the globe, and the degradations of barbarism in the “ other? And is not the same *inequality*, the same *spe-* “ *cial choice* in the distribution of benefits, equally appa- “ rent in the *superiorities* of *mental* character? Why “ are some men endowed with personal qualities, which “ at once lift them above the level on which the multi- “ tudes stand around them? Why have the names of “ Alfred, Newton, Bacon, or Locke, become endear- “ ed to our own land, but because they possessed qua-

⁹ Inst. v. ii. p. 411. Vaugh. 87, 97, 131, &c.

“fications superior to those which mark out the ordinary portraiture of human agents?”¹

As this reasoning claims for itself, the weight and importance, generally attached to the so justly celebrated argument from analogy, it is necessary to examine, how far its claims are well founded.

The argument from analogy, may be stated thus—That it is probable, at least, that it is not improbable, that the Deity, in *like* circumstances, will act in a *like* manner to what he has already done: or perhaps, it might be more correct, to say, that in such cases, he would act on the same, or similar principles.² Now, let us examine, how far the circumstances of the case, warrant the argument from *analogy* or *likeness*, which, it is attempted to establish, in the preceding quotations.

In the first place, it is evident, that this present existence, is—to man—only a *primary* state. That

¹ Noel's Prospects of the Christian Church. Lond. 1828, p. 194.

² “But it must be allowed just,” says Butler, “to join abstract reasonings with the observation of facts, and argue from such facts as are *known*, to others that are *that are like them*:****This method, then, of concluding and determining****being evidently conclusive, in various degrees, *proportionable* to the *degree* and *exactness* of the *whole analogy* or *likeness*; &c.”

I may also quote the definition of an antagonist:—“Analogy argues from proportionable causes, to proportionable effects, and from *similarity* of circumstances, to *similarity* of consequences.” (Belsham's Elements, Lond. 1801.—Introduct. p.lxxxii.)

is, it has not been preceded by any other—the subjects of it, have not occupied any other; and therefore its *inequalities* are those, of simple *creation*; and can have no reference whatever, to any *past* conduct of those concerned. Now, the utmost that analogy can infer from this view is, that there may exist *similar* inequalities of *creation*, among other beings, and in other worlds. Hence the natural conclusion, that there may be various orders of angelic existences, widely differing from each other, in glory and excellence. But, our future existence will be an *ultimate*, not a primary state—one, the subjects of which, will have already made their appearance, and acted their parts on a previous scene; and who will have thus exhibited, their various conduct and characters, to a surrounding world. Hence, the *inequalities* arising out of *simple creation*, can furnish no *analogy* by which to determine the differences of *their* destinies. For the circumstances—so far considered—are totally unlike; and analogy is not a dissimilarity, but a likeness.

In the next place, it is acknowledged on all hands, that the present life, is one of *probation*: and that man is answerable for all the gifts committed to his charge. In this point of view, the utmost that analogy can infer, from the *inequality* of these gifts—whether natural or spiritual—is, that there may be other worlds of *probation*, where *similar* differences exist. But it is not denied, at least in words, (though the predestinarian representations of a future judgment—as has been shown do virtually deny it,) that a future life is to be one of *retribution*—one, whose gradations, must have a reference, to those previous differences of fidelity and conduct, whose existence shall be made

manifest, when the secrets of all hearts are disclosed, and every man is called to give an account of his stewardship. Hence, the gifts of this life, and those of a future, are under totally different circumstances. The former not only may, but must be—in the *first instance* at least—*irrespective*: because, they cannot possibly refer, to *any* state of probation. But surely, this furnishes no analogy, as to the distribution of those blessings, which shall *follow* such a state; that is, there is *no analogy*, *no likeness*, *no similarity*, between the *concomitant circumstances*, of the two distributions; and therefore, we cannot argue, that the character of the one, shall resemble that of the other. On the contrary, the extreme *dissimilarity* of the cases supposed, should lead to the conclusion, that there shall be a *correspondent* difference, in the natures of the respective distributions.

Similar inferences might be deduced from the consideration, that this life, is a state of *growth*, *discipline*, and *preparation*; whereas, the next is expected to be one, of maturity, repose, and fruition. But the difference is so plain, that it seems to me unnecessary, to press the comparison any further.

Thus, it is evident, that the reasoning of the preceding quotations leads us, to confound a state of trial, with a state of retribution; the *free* gifts of creation and of grace, with the retrospective awards of judgement; and the necessarily arbitrary adjustments, of a preparatory discipline, with those judicial consequences, which are to exhibit at once, its essential sanctions, and its permanent results. ²

* Whoever will reflect candidly on the parable of

I may be further permitted to remark, that if care be not taken to guard the argument from analogy, from such perversions, it may be made---in the hands of the sceptic and infidel---to subserve the most baneful purposes. It may be said, for example, that since vice is often prosperous in this world, we may conclude from analogy, that it may, (to a similar degree at least,) prosper in the next: that as virtue is too often doomed to struggle with calamity here, it may also be equally unfortunate hereafter: that since in temporal things, no diligence or precautions can ensure success, so, in spirituals, the most devoted faith and obedience, may prove equally fruitless. Now, the inconclusiveness of these, and similar statements, must, I presume, be shown in the same manner, in which I have attempted to point out the fallacy of the argument, contained in the preceding extracts: that is, by showing, that the pretended analogies on which they depend, do *not* take into consideration, the most *important* circumstances of the cases, compared---that they rest, on *partial* appeals to facts---that they are supported by an *ex parte* evidence; and that therefore, they are not real and true, but only apparent, fanciful, and fallacious.³

the Talents, will, I think, admit the justness of these observations.

³ Butler, did not consider that it belonged to his inquiry, to secure from perversion, the argument he has so successfully used, in defence of true religion:—"It is not my design" he says, "to inquire further into the nature, the foundation, and measure of probability; or whence it proceeds, that *likeness* should beget that presumption, opinion, and full conviction, which the human mind is

VII. There is another class of speculations, which it is necessary to notice, though it must be with brevity. In these, the *ordinary* notions, concerning freedom of Will, are denied; and the doctrine, either of Physical, Philosophical, or of Moral Necessity, is maintained in its place, according to the system adopted by the opponent of Free Will. I mean not to allude under this head, to any argument in favour of necessity, deduced from the divine prescience, or the divine decrees, arguments which have been already considered, so far as was consistent with my plan. Those, now to be discussed, are derived from the *supposed nature* of the faculty in question; or rather, from some *arbitrary* assumptions about its *supposed manner of acting*. It is not necessary for my purpose, to distinguish the shades of difference that separate the lines of reasoning, adopted by the opponents of free will alluded to above. For the same general observations, that will enable me to apply to one, the test I have laid

“formed to receive from it, and which it does necessarily produce in every one; or to guard against the errors, to which reasoning from analogy is liable. This belongs to the subject of Logic, and is a part of that subject, which has not yet been thoroughly considered.” It is much to be regretted, that he did not apply his powerful mind, to this part of the subject. But, whoever carefully attends to his system of reasoning, so as to seize on his principles, and to imbibe his candid and investigating spirit, may easily avoid falling into such extraordinary and groundless perversions of the argument from analogy, as that, the fallacy of which, I have endeavoured to point out.

See Dr. Thomas Reid’s judicious observations on Analogy, in his “Essays on the Intellectual and Active Powers of Man,”—Essay 1, chap. 4.

down, will—to those who wish to consider it—show its applicability to all. I shall, therefore, confine myself, to the statements of those, who advocate a moral necessity.

Their notion of liberty is; that it extends to the body, not to the will—to actions, but not to volitions. Hence, they assert, that our volitions—as they arise—can determine our personal conduct; but, that we cannot ourselves give rise to our volitions—we cannot originate or determine them—that is, in other words, we cannot of *ourselves* will or choose—our volitions must be produced, at the moment of willing, not by ourselves, but by something, at that moment, external to ourselves.⁴ Hence, they say, that no greater liberty *can* exist, or be *supposed*, than this, that a man can do (that is act) as he wills, pleases, or chooses; though, at the same time, he cannot will, or choose, in any other way, than he is

⁴ Among motives, some reckon that “the state of the mind “that views a proposed object of choice, is another thing “that contributes to the agreeableness or disagreeableness “of that object.” (Edwards on Free Will. Edin. 1818, p. 13.) But a little after, the same Author remarks: “But “possibly it is needless and improper, to mention the frame “and state of the mind, as a distinct ground of the agree- “ableness of objects.” * * * * * “Perhaps, if we strictly “consider the matter, the different temper and state of the “mind makes no alteration as to the agreeableness of ob- “jects, any other way, than as it makes the objects them- “selves appear differently beautiful or deformed, having “apparent pleasure or pain attending them.” According to the theory in question, it is evidently impossible, for any one, of *himself*, to alter this bias, or state of the mind; so, that I am still justified in stating, that this theory refers the whole determination of any *single volition*, to *external* influences, by whatever name they may be called.

impelled, or influenced by motives. In short, he cannot exercise any *discretionary* power—in *willing itself*. All this, they think that they can prove, by *abstract* argument. The substance of their pretended *demonstration*, though it has been expounded, diversified, and repeated, in every possible variety of form, that is calculated to divert attention, from the only true subject of inquiry—viz. what is the *fact* of the case—may be all compressed into a few words, and is thus popularly stated, by one of its latest advocates.

“ The Calvinist, on the other hand, affects to deride
 “ the notion of liberty, consisting in indifference and a
 “ self-determining principle. If the will determine it-
 “ self, then, because the will can act only by choosing,
 “ it follows, that in *every free choice*, there is a *pre-*
 “ *vious* determination of the mind; and for the same
 “ reason this previous determination itself must be *pre-*
 “ *ceded* by *another choice*; and by repeating this argu-
 “ ment, you are inevitably reduced to the perplexing
 “ dilemma, of acknowledging an infinity of volitions,
 “ or of admitting the first volition to exist without a
 “ cause. In a similar way the opinion of a freedom of
 “ indifference is briefly refuted.” (Dean Milner’s Essay
 on Liberty. Lond. 1824, p. 13, 14.)⁵

⁵ To the same effect Edwards. “ And, therefore, if the
 “ will determines all its own free acts, then *every free act*
 “ *of choice is determined by a preceding act of choice*,
 “ choosing that act. And if that preceding act of the will
 “ or choice, be also a free act, then by these principles, in
 “ this act too, the will is self-determined; that is, this in
 “ like manner, is an act the soul voluntarily chooses, or
 “ which is the same thing, it is an act determined still by

To the whole of this, and of all such arguments, I object, that they are altogether *unphilosophical*. Because, they pretend to decide by *abstract reasoning*, on that, which is truly, *matter of fact*; and which, therefore,

“ a preceding act of the will choosing that. And the like
 “ may again be observed of the last-mentioned act. Which
 “ brings us directly to a contradiction; for it supposes an
 “ act of the will preceding the first act in the whole train,
 “ directing and determining the rest; or a free act of the will,
 “ before the first free act of the will. Or else we must
 “ come at last to an act of the will, determining the conse-
 “ quent acts, wherein the will is not self-determined, and
 “ so is not a free act in this notion of freedom: but if the
 “ first in the train, determining and fixing the rest, be not
 “ free, none of them all can be free.” (Edwards on Free Will. Edinb. 1818, p. 39.)

Were I inclined, to enter into such merely speculative reasonings, it were easy to show, that this author—like most of those on the same side—does, in fact, beg the negative of the question in dispute; viz. whether man has a self-determining power, in willing, as well as in acting. For, it is quite evident, that any *past* act of the will, (that is any *past* volition) is no more the faculty *itself*, that we call the will, than any *past* act of the man, whether mental or bodily, is the man himself. Now, it will be found on examination, that the whole force of the preceding argument, (and much more, to the same purpose, by the same, and by various other authors,) evidently depends, on the following assumption: viz. that the faculty called the will cannot act (that is will or choose) without being roused into action (that is into volition) by *some impulse*, whether that impulse be somewhat from *without*, or some *previous volition* of its own. And this is only asserting, (in a round about manner it must be confessed) that the will cannot act, without being acted upon—cannot

ought to be *determined by experience* alone. The question is—what in this respect, is the *nature* of man. And, is this to be determined by hypothesis, speculation, or conjecture ; when we have within our reach—nay, in our

act of itself, or determine of itself—which is the very point in dispute. So that, the entire of the preceding argument, is *founded on a Petitio Principii*. Yet, to this reasoning—which he exhibits with the air of demonstration—Mr. Edwards recurs several times : and whenever he wishes to prove, that the will *cannot act of itself, or determine of itself*, he commences his proof, by asserting—in other words—the very thing to be proved : viz. that its *determination*, must be *produced*, by *something from without itself*, either, in the shape of a motive or of a past volition. So that all his demonstrations, proceed in this style. The Will *cannot act of itself*, (that is, freely and independently) because—it *must be acted upon* ; it *cannot determine of itself*, because—it *must be determined by something else*. Which, is only expressing the same thing in other words, by way of proving it.

By the use of a similar *Petitio Principii*, it could, I apprehend, be just as well proved, that we have no *self moving* power : but, that all our motions must be produced, by something else than ourselves. For no being can be put into motion, except by some act or movement communicating motion to it. If, therefore, any being move freely, or independently of any *external* cause of motion, then, such being must move itself, or communicate motion to itself. But, since no motion can be communicated but by an act of motion, therefore, such a being must communicate this motion to itself, by an act of motion, immediately preceding and producing the motion communicated ;—that is, by some *previous* act of motion. Or else we must suppose a motion produced, without any thing to produce it ; that is,

own bosoms—the means of ascertaining the real truth, by experiment? This fallacious method of proceeding with regard to mind, exactly resembles that, formerly pursued with regard to matter. But who would now

an effect without a cause. And, by following the same reasoning, it can be proved of this *previous* act of motion, that if it also be free and independent of any *external* cause, then must it likewise be produced or communicated by another *previous* act of motion; or else, we should here again have an effect without a cause. And so, we are either driven, to acknowledge an *infinite series* of acts of motion, each preceding and causing the next: or to admit, that some *one* of them, must be communicated by an *external* motion. And, if we acknowledge this of any of the series, we may as well acknowledge it of the last; and thereby, free ourselves from the absurdity, of an infinite series. So thus it is proved, that no *being* can move of itself; that is, originate motion. To my mind, this reasoning is just as convincing, in this case, as is that of Edwards, to prove, that no *being* can will, choose, or determine of itself; that is, originate volitions or determinations. And it may be remarked, as shall be shown in another place, that this reasoning would be just as true of the Deity, as of any *finite* being.

Now, it seems to me, that the only sound and philosophical answer, to the *sophistry* of both these arguments is, to appeal to facts and experience. And, the phenomena of body and of mind, which I experience in myself, authorize me to reject all such casuistry, without being at the trouble to refute it; and to be content with replying, that I *feel*, that I *can* move of myself, *without* being moved by any external cause—without any thing, in fact, but an exercise of my own free power of moving: and, in like manner, that I equally *feel*, that I *can* will or determine of myself,

venture, to pronounce on the qualities of any *substance*, without submitting it to the test of experimental analysis? And shall it be said, that *mind* is of so much

without being determined by any thing external—without any thing, in short, but an exercise of my own power of choosing or determining.

I confess, that neither side seems to me, to speak accurately, when they talk of the *Will*, as acting *separately* from the man himself. It is the man that wills, determines, thinks, loves, hates. And, it also seems to me, that it would be exceedingly difficult—if not impossible—to give any definitions of these operations, which would bear *logical* examination. These are all felt, but cannot be defined by *either side*, so as to lay a foundation in such definitions, for abstract demonstration. They may be described by their effects; or the mind may be brought to turn in on itself, and to reflect on them, so that words of established usage, may come to be understood as expressing them. But as to their *nature*, it cannot be determined by speculation; but each man must judge of it in his own case. And it is demanding rather too much, to require from any man, that he should submit, to be *argued out* of his *consciousness*. To me, therefore, it seems more consistent, with what we *experience* within ourselves, to say, that man is *conscious*, of possessing a power of willing or preferring, as well as of moving; and, that in willing, he *feels* himself as *free*, as in acting; (I speak not of those, who have given the reins, to caprice, or to passion;) while, he yet confesses, that both in his volitions, and in his actions, he *ought* to determine, according to conscience and reason. If any one asks me, to *define* this power of willing, more accurately; I confess, that I am unable to satisfy myself, much less others, in any attempt of the kind. I feel it, but cannot define it.

less importance, that *its* properties, *its* powers, *its* operations, are to be made the sport of theory and speculation? For my own part, the numerous controversies on this subject have convinced me, that there is hardly a system that could be proposed—however vain or visionary—that could not be plausibly supported, by such abstract reasoning. Nor do I find, that the wildest of them all, can be satisfactorily refuted, except by an appeal to facts. Surely then, the true method of inquiry would be, to *commence* with facts—to examine in the *first* instance, what it is, that we *experience*—what it is, that we *feel* in ourselves—what it is, that we are *conscious of*.

Nor is it a matter of much consequence, whether we can give accurate definitions, of the *manner* in which the mind acts, in exercising these powers, that we feel and experience in ourselves. Indeed, I doubt, whether it be possible to define at all, the *manner* of mental operations. But this does not diminish the force or clearness of our perception of their *existence*. Who, for example, would doubt, that he can, as he wills, put his body into motion, or keep it at rest? Yet, who would pretend to define or explain, the nature or manner, of that *operation* of mind upon body, by which he achieves this result. He can, indeed, describe the *effect* produced, but not the *manner* of producing it; he is *conscious*, that he has the *power* of doing it, though he cannot tell *how* he does it. In the same manner, it may be extremely difficult—if not impossible—to define with logical accuracy, the nature of that mental act, by which, the mind wills, chooses, or determines—by which, it regulates, or restrains, or indulges, either it's own habitual prejudices and propensities, or those of the body with which it is connected—by which it can choose, be-

tween things apparently indifferent (a moment before) even to itself; and find a pleasure, in the very act of choosing, or, as it were, of creating a preference. It may be very possible, to feel, or to be conscious of all this; and yet, it may be impossible, to explain how it comes to pass, or to define the manner, in which the will operates in effecting it. And yet, all the preceding arguments are founded on the supposition, that the character of this mental process, is to be determined by definition and demonstration. And Necessarians require us, to disown the possession of those powers, the *manner* of whose *operation*, we cannot thus explain and prove. For my part, I feel, that such a demand, carries as little of rational authority with it, as if they should require me, to disclaim the power of locomotion, because I could not comprehend, much less define or demonstrate, the *manner* in which I effect it, when I will it. And I doubt not, that were any of them to attempt so to define and prove it, that metaphysical arguments could be devised—just as plausible as any of their's against Free Will—to prove that the *thing so defined* was *impossible*; and which should so perplex and confuse the whole matter, as to compel them—as they compel us—to appeal to their actual experience, and to that firm conviction arising therefrom, in proof, that they are endowed with the powers, to which they lay claim.

The whole question, therefore, must be decided—as a matter of fact—by experience. But experience, in this case, is consciousness. And, therefore, to consciousness the appeal must be made. And, the question of fact, to be determined by consciousness, is this, Whether men, in willing or determining, do not, on

many occasions, feel themselves *free* from any *necessity* of determining in *one way more than another*, and able to choose, or *prefer* any *one* of *different* things then *present* to their mind. Nay, even *immediately after* making a choice, are they not often conscious, that they *might* have *chosen otherwise*, than they have done, without supposing themselves, or the circumstances of the case, in any way altered? If they *experience* within themselves this power in any *single* case, it is enough to prove its general existence; even though in others, they may find its exercise restrained or overruled, whether by the bias of prejudice, by the power of habits, or by the force of passion. It proves, I say, its existence, just as much, as any single instance, in which a man should find, that he could move his body, would be sufficient evidence to him, that such a power is proper to his nature, when in the due possession of its ordinary functions; though, at other times, he might find himself shackled by chains, or paralyzed by disease.

Thus the question of *fact* to be determined, is; whether man does, or does not, *experience within himself*, the existence of such moral capabilities. And on this point, I repeat, that each man must be the judge in his own case. For his own conscience alone, and not the hypothesis, or arguments of another, must determine, what powers he is possessed of. It is, indeed, impossible for the philosopher, to put this question, to every individual of the human race; and therefore, he is obliged to deduce, by inferences from the general maxims and conduct of mankind, (as I have endeavoured to explain in pages 13-15,) what would probably be the decision of the majority, were it possible to institute such an inquiry. To me it appears, that the

prevailing opinions, rules, and customs, that regulate domestick and social intercourse; and which form the basis of all political enactments; rest on the supposition, and testify to the predominant belief; that man *is* endowed with a power, of exercising over himself, both as to volition and as to action, a self restraint, a self determination, a self control, which would enable him in most of his temporal concerns,⁶ to *will and act otherwise* than he does:⁷ and which, therefore, renders him

⁶ I mean not here to assert, that man possesses this power in *spiritual* things, while *ungenerated* and *unassisted* by *Divine Grace*. (See Appendix iii. and note, p. 10.) But, I see no *primâ facie* absurdity in the conjecture, (and I advance it here only as conjecture,) that the same Being, who has conferred on man, by creation, this power in natural and temporal things, may, if it please him, confer by regeneration, a similar one in spiritual things; and may preserve it unimpaired, or may renew it, (according to his good pleasure,) by the influences of his Holy Spirit. Nor, do I see any good reason, for supposing, that any power so conferred should render man, *less free* in spiritual things, than he was before in natural things? On the contrary, if "He make us free then shall we be free indeed." (John viii. 36.) But this is a *mixed* question, that must be determined by the word of God, and the experience of spiritual, holy men.

⁷ I have shewn by the quotation, in the note, p. 15, that the above is a *fair statement*, of the *matter of fact* in dispute. One or two more extracts may be added here.

"Mr. Collins, one of the most admired writers on the subject of necessity, has stated the question in the following manner. Man, he says, is a necessary agent, if all his actions are so determined by the cause preceding each, that not

properly accountable, for his determinations, and for his conduct.

In truth, even those who in theory profess to disbelieve this, seem to *act*, as if they practically both

“one past action could possibly not have come to pass, or have been otherwise than it hath been; nor one future action can possibly not come to pass, or be otherwise than it shall be. But he is a free agent, if he is able under the circumstances and causes he then is, to do different things; or, in other words, if he is not unavoidably determined, in every point of time, by the circumstances he is in, and causes he is under, to do that *one* thing he does, and *not possibly* to do *any other*.” (Rees’s Cyclopædia, Arts. Necessity and Agent.)

An author of a very different class, and an eminent Christian, uses similar language: “On the contrary, I would define Necessity to be, that, by which whatever comes to pass, *cannot but come to pass*, (all circumstances taken into account) and can come to pass in *no other* manner, than it does; which coincides with Aristotle’s Definition of Necessity. We call that Necessary which cannot be otherwise.” (Toplady on Necessity. Works, Lon. 1825. Vol. vi. p. 11.)

“By the mechanism of human action I mean,” (says Dr. Hartley,) “that each action results from the previous circumstances of body and mind, in the same manner, and with the same certainty, as other effects do from their mechanical causes; so that a person *cannot* do indifferently *either* of the actions *A*, and its contrary *a*, while the previous circumstances are the same; but is under an *absolute necessity* of doing *one* of them, and *that only*. Agreeably to this, I suppose, that by *free will* is meant, a *power* of doing *either* the action *A*, or its contrary *a*;

felt and believed it. "In the present state," says Dr. Reid, "we see some who zealously maintain the doctrine of necessity; others who as zealously maintain that of liberty. One would be apt to think that

"while the previous circumstances remain the same." (Hartley on Man. Lon. 1791. vol. i. p. 500.) And these sentiments are quoted and adopted by Belsham, (Elem. p. 227.)

"In other words," says Dr. Priestly, "I maintain that there is some *fixed law of nature respecting the will*, as well as the other powers of the mind, and every thing else in the constitution of nature; and consequently that it is never determined without some real or apparent *cause*, foreign to itself, i. e. without some motive of choice; or that motives influence us in some definite and invariable manner; so that every volition, or choice, is constantly regulated, and determined, by what precedes it. And this *constant* determination of mind, according to the motives presented to it, is all that I mean by its *necessary determination*. This being admitted to be the fact, there will be a necessary connexion between all things past, present, and to come, in the way of proper *cause and effect*, as much in the intellectual, as in the natural world; so that, how little soever the bulk of mankind may be apprehensive of it, according to the established laws of nature, *no event* could have been, *otherwise* than it *has been, is, or is to be*; and, therefore, *all* things past, present, and to come, are *precisely* what the Author of nature really *intended* them to be, and has *made provision for*." (Priestly on Necessity. Lon. 1777. vol. ii. p. 78.) This description, let it be observed, includes *all* things, sins not excepted; so that *all* sins, not only in act, but also in their base motives, and in their abominable incitements,

“ a practical belief of these two systems should produce
 “ very different conduct in them that hold them; yet
 “ we see no such difference in the affairs of common
 “ life. The Fatalist deliberates and resolves, and

both are, and ever have been “ *precisely* what the Author
 “ of nature *intended* them to be, and has *made provision*
 “ *for!!!*” (See also Sect. x. same vol.)

“ Philosophical liberty may be defined,” (says Mr. Crombie, another advocate for Necessity,) “ to be the power of
 “ doing *either* of two contrary actions in any given definite situation.”

“ The state of the question,” he continues, “ may be
 “ illustrated by the following example. Judas impelled by
 “ avarice, betrayed his master. A Libertarian affirms,
 “ that he might have avoided the crime; a Necessarian
 “ denies it, and asserts, that *every man* in the *same circumstances*, in which he was placed, all things considered,
 “ would have *acted precisely* in the same way!!!” * * * *
 “ A Necessarian, believing in the necessary concatenation of
 “ all events, maintains, that the treachery of Judas was the
 “ *certain* and *unavoidable* effect of his situation at the time
 “ of action; which situation was the necessary and predetermined effect of a previous one; so that tracing to its
 “ origin this *continued chain* of *necessary* causes and *effects*, of antecedent circumstances, and unavoidable consequences, every action of his life is ultimately ascribable
 “ to that condition in which his Maker originally placed him. A Libertarian contends on the contrary, that there
 “ is no *necessary* connexion between certain situations and certain volitions; that in every condition in which he was
 “ placed he might have *acted otherwise than he did* act; and
 “ that his virtue and vice resulted, not from any previous
 “ appointment of the Deity, but from the determinations

“slights his faith. He lays down a plan of conduct,
 “and prosecutes it with vigour and industry. He exhorts
 “and commands, and holds those to be answerable for
 “their conduct, to whom he hath committed any charge.

“of his own free will. In general, a Necessarian believes
 “that every thing is predetermined by the Divine Being—
 “that whatever has been *must have been*; and that what-
 “ever will be, *must be*.” (Crombie on Philosophical Necessity. Lon. 1793. p. 5, 6.)

The foregoing statement, relative to Judas, is paralleled by a declaration of Mr. Toplady's relative to the sin of our first parents. The excuses resorted to by them are well known. “And the man said, the woman whom *thou gavest* to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” “And the woman said, the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” This defence, so generally condemned by divines, as groundless and impious, is adduced by Wesley, as one that the Necessarian hypothesis would authorize; and, as therefore furnishing a proof, of the unscriptural character of that scheme; since the plea was *not* admitted by their most *righteous* judge, but a tremendous punishment was inflicted; which, on the supposition of the truth or validity of the defence, would be altogether irreconcilable with divine and unerring justice. In answer to Mr. Wesley, Mr. Toplady attempts to prove; “that the first man and his wife, “were Necessitarians antecedently to their fall. And if they “afterwards endeavoured to account for their fall on the “principle of necessity, I must declare, that for my own “part, I see neither the impiety of the attempt, nor the “lameness of the reasoning!!!” (Topl. Neces. p. 86.) What a system must that be, which could tempt so pious a man, and so zealous a Calvinist, as Mr. T. to hazard in its defence, such a declaration.

I have given these extracts, thus at large, because I

" He blames those that are false or unfaithful to him,
 " as other men do. He perceives dignity and worth in
 " some characters and actions, and in others demerit
 " and turpitude. He resents injuries and is grateful
 " for good offices. If any man should plead the doc-
 " trine of necessity to exculpate murder, theft, or rob-
 " bery, his judge, though a fatalist, would laugh at
 " such a plea, and would not allow it even to alleviate
 " the crime. In all such cases he sees that it would be
 " absurd not to act and judge as those ought to do who
 " believe themselves and other men to be free agents;
 " just as the sceptic, to avoid absurdity, must, when
 " he goes into the world, act and judge like other men
 " who are not sceptics. If the fatalist be as little in-
 " fluenced by the opinion of necessity in his moral and
 " religious concerns, and in his expectations concerning
 " another world, as he is in the common affairs of life,
 " his speculative opinion will probably do him little hurt.
 " But if he trust so far to the doctrine of necessity, as
 " to indulge sloth and inactivity in his duty, and hope
 " to exculpate himself to his Maker by that doctrine,
 " let him consider, whether he sustains this excuse from
 " his servants and dependents, where they are committed
 " to his charge."

This, and much more to the same effect, that might
 be advanced, goes to prove from *facts*, that the great
 bulk of mankind *act*, as if they disbelieved the doc-
 trines of necessity: nay, that so strong is the current of

should hope, that these statements, which so boldly *contra-*
dict (as it seems to me) the general *testimony* of conscious-
 ness, would when thus fairly presented to the mind, carry
 with them their own practical refutation.

opinion and of practical feeling against it, that even Necessarians themselves, whatever they may profess to the contrary, are obliged to regulate their conduct, on the supposition, that men *are* free agents, that is, that they can, on various occasions, both *will*, and *act*, *differently* from what they do. All of which goes to establish the position, that the existence of moral liberty is supported by the most philosophical tests that can be resorted to on this subject; because they are the things we *know best*, and about which, we are most capable of forming a practical—an experimental judgment: viz. the general testimony of consciousness—the prevailing convictions of mankind, as evidenced by their manner of treating each other, and of submitting to be treated themselves.

How speculative and fallacious is the method of arguing adopted in the extract cited before, (p. 125) may be further illustrated by the following consideration; that it pretends to determine in this particular, (by such *metaphysical abstractions*) not only the nature of Man, but that of all created intelligences, nay, even that of the Deity himself. Now, what should we think of that naturalist, who should take upon himself to deduce and demonstrate from *abstract* principles, what *must*, or what *must not* be, those chemical properties, by which, omnipotence has diversified the myriads of *unknown* substances, that are crowded through countless *unknown* worlds? Would the reasonings of such a theorist be listened to for a moment, by practical sensible men? Yet, the foregoing arguments tend to assign limits to the creating power of God with regard to *mind*, of the *essence* and *possible* varieties of which, we are just as ignorant, as we are about those of *matter*.

They pretend to prove that there cannot be such a thing as a free agent, or in other words that Omnipotence cannot create one; nay, that even God himself must be a necessitated being! For, it is evident that whenever an attempt is made to establish any theory of mind, by considerations of a *general* character only, and which do not so essentially involve some such qualities of finite beings, as shall effectually serve to restrain its application to such beings alone; whenever I say this is done, the resulting conclusions, if true at all, must be true of *all* beings whatsoever. The arguments generally adopted by the supporters of moral necessity, seem to me to be of this description. Nor can I discover in them, any limiting premises which would legitimately warrant them, to restrict their conclusions to *any order* of intelligences. Consequently, if true at all, they must prove the necessitation of the highest, not less than of the lowest of beings: that is of *all* angelic existences, nay, even of the Deity himself as well as of man.

Most of its advocates seem to have felt this difficulty. Some have boldly admitted and maintained it; thus falling into a scheme of theology, presenting no practical difference, that I can perceive, from fatalism itself. A scheme, "which not only annihilates the power of man, but annihilates that of God also, and *subjects* him, as well as all his creatures, to the *control of causes* which he is unable to resist."⁸ A necessity which thus ingulphs and forces onward, in its resistless and mysterious course, the volitions and actions of the Deity, as well of his creatures; and chains up with as

⁸ Stewart's Active and Moral Powers, vol. II. p. 483.

relentless bonds, the active energies of mind, as the mere passiveness of matter. To which scheme, it is unnecessary to propose any other refutation, than its obvious and irreconcilable opposition, to those things that we know from *experience*, and not from speculation—all that man feels within him, and sees passing around him.

Others endeavour to escape from this monstrous result, by attempts to show, that necessity in the Deity is not the *same* thing, as necessity in man: though, as I have observed, their arguments do not contain any thing, restricting the conclusion to one, more than to the other.

To this I may be permitted to add, that some of the latest statements on this point, seem to me to involve the strangest inconsistencies. Necessity, when predicated of man, is insisted on as a ground of *humility*, and of course must be considered as a proof of his *imperfection*. Its admission is therefore demanded of the pious, as a disclaimer of “self sovereignty,” and independence; and its *opponents* are loaded with the charge, of aiming at something, approaching to *self-deification*. But, when the very same necessity is applied to the Deity, it becomes the companion and safeguard of liberty—a proof of exalted excellence, and a just ground of *adoration* and *homage*. These notions “of necessity and freedom go hand in hand—they “stand or fall together; and the degree of a man’s “freedom, in a certain sense, rises in exact proportion to “the strength of this necessity. The more powerful “the tendency of taste, and the influence of external “inducements, the more vigorous is the freedom with “which an agent exercises his volitions. The *infinite* “rectitude of the Divine nature, conjoined with the

“*infinite* clearness of his judgments respecting ends to “be pursued, make him at once the subject of the “*highest necessity*, and the most *unlimited freedom*.”⁹

Here obviously, the remark may be repeated, that “these notions of necessity and freedom,” relied upon by the author, and previously stated by himself, involve no consideration of *finiteness*, nor of any restriction depending thereon; and, that therefore, the mention of *Infinity* is *superfluous*, and can in no way affect the conclusion. Its introduction, therefore, here, as *constituting a difference*, is but an attempt, to divert attention from the real character of the conclusion; which, by the very nature of the argument used in obtaining it, is *general*, and which, therefore, if true at all, must be *equally*, and in the *same sense*, true of all intellectual beings whatever. Hence, if necessity be the *ground of humility*, in the one case, it cannot be a *proof of exalted excellence* in the other.

The language and arguments of many Necessarians relative to the nature of Deity—the nature and manner of his volitions, &c. seem to me so presumptuous, that I shall not imitate their error, by enter-

⁹ Gilbert, ut Sup. 563.

Those who defend Necessity, on *merely physical* grounds, are in some measure, free from this difficulty; since *their* arguments are *peculiar* to the nature of the *human* soul, as it is represented by *their* hypothesis. But, on the other hand, they are liable to be driven to a *general* admission of Materialism, as well with respect to the Divine Essence, as with regard to the human soul; which would at once, render the former liable to all the arguments, before only applicable to the latter; and thus, subject the Deity himself, to *physical* necessity.

ing into the discussion at all. For, notwithstanding much that has been written on both sides by the ablest authors, I must confess for myself, that I cannot form the remotest conception, of the manner in which the Divine volitions arise or operate: even supposing, that I should be allowed to exclude altogether, the perplexing consideration of their eternal pre-existence. When, therefore, it is asserted or attempted to be proved, that the Deity cannot possess “any self-determining power”—that he is so necessitated, that he never could have willed, or acted, *otherwise* than he has done, &c. ¹ it seems to me, that such daring speculations deserve no other answer, than that instinctive rejection, which they generally meet with from common sense, and from the feelings of practical men: who, conscious, that they themselves often might both will and act, *otherwise* than they do, cannot suppose, that the Creator is more limited in powers, than the creatures of his hands. ²

¹ Edw. ut sup. part iv, s. 7, 8.—Will^s. Sov. and Equit. 367, 466.

² Though unwilling to attempt, because totally unable to comprehend, any discussion concerning the manner or operation of the Divine Volitions; yet, I cannot help remarking here, on the strange and perplexing inconsistencies to which high Calvinists expose themselves by siding with Necessarians. To notice only one, we have it asserted, (as referred to in the preceding note,) by talented, pious, and excellent Calvinists; that the Deity, in all his volitions and acts, and of course, in his *decrees*, and in his *gifts of grace*, is so necessitated that he could not have willed, or acted, *otherwise* than he has done: and yet, Calvinists tells us, that his decrees and his gifts of grace, are so completely *free and*

The other part of the dilemma, set forth in the foregoing extract, (p. 125.) remains to be considered.—“You are inevitably reduced,” says the Necessarian, “to the perplexing dilemma, of acknowledging an infinity of volitions, or of admitting the *first volition to exist without a cause.*” And “If once it should be allowed, that things should come to pass without a cause, we should not only have *no proof* of the *Being of God*, but we should be without evidence of the existence of any thing whatsoever, but our more immediately present ideas and consciousness.”³

unrestrained, that he *might* have saved those whom he has reprobated, and reprobated those whom he has saved; that is, that he *might* have willed and acted *otherwise*, than He has done. Or regard it in another point of view—Necessity tells us, that it is the glorious excellence of the Deity, to be *constrained* in all his volitions and actions, to decide according to the best possible motives: while Calvinism tells us, that it would degrade the *freedom* of his grace and elections, to suppose him determined by *any regard* to the merits or demerits of Moral Agents, as the motives of his decrees of eternal rewards and punishments. Yet we find Calvinists making common cause with Necessarians,—Edwards, eulogized by Priestly, and Priestly in his turn, eulogized by Toplady—and orthodox christians thus ranging themselves under the same standard, and fighting in the same ranks, as Hobbes, Collins, and Belsham. Surely the Calvinist should suspect *this abstract* part of his system, when he finds himself in such company; and become more and more anxious, to curtail it of every dogma, which is not purely and plainly *Scriptural*.

³ Edwards, 52.

This, it must be admitted, is an alarming imputation on the doctrine of human liberty; and could it be substantiated, would be sufficient to determine every pious mind against it.

Though sufficient answers have, as I conceive, been supplied by those, who have accurately examined our notions of "cause and effect," yet, for all *practical* purposes, it seems to me quite unnecessary, to enter into that discussion.—The main point to be considered, is this: Does the advocate for liberty *feel* his belief in the existence of a great First Cause, or the proof on which that belief is founded, to be weaker in his own view of the subject, than in that of the Necessarian? The difference between them is simply this. The Necessarian says, every effect must have a cause; and, therefore, those effects called volitions and actions, must have *motives* as their causes.⁴ His opponent admits

⁴ Though it does not precisely belong to my plan, I cannot refrain from quoting the arguments of a very able writer; who shows, even on *abstract* considerations, the absurdity of supposing mere *motives* to be the *necessitating causes* of actions or volitions.

"Necessity," says Dr. Clarke, "in philosophical questions, always signifies *absolute* necessity. Hypothetical Necessity, and Moral Necessity, are only *figurative* ways of speaking, and in philosophical strictness of truth, are no necessity at all. The question is not whether a thing *must* be, when it is supposed that it *is*, or that it is to be; (which is Hypothetical Necessity:) neither is it the question whether it be true, that a *good being*, continuing to be *good*, cannot do evil; or a *wise being*, continuing to be *wise*, cannot act *unwisely*; or a *veracious person* continuing to be veracious, cannot tell a lie; (which is *moral necessity*.)"—And these in truth, are all only identical

his first, but denies his second position. He admits that every effect must have a cause, or a somewhat that is *supposed* to produce it. But, for those effects

propositions. "But the true and only question in philosophy concerning *liberty*, is, whether the *immediate physical cause* or *principle of action*, be indeed in him whom we call the *Agent*; or whether it be some *other reason sufficient*, which is the *real cause* of the action, by operating upon the agent, and making him to be, not indeed an *agent*, but a mere patient." (Clarke's Controversy with Leibnitz. Lond. 1717, p. 287.)

"But," says the same author, "what idea can any man frame, how pleasure or pain, which are mere *passive perceptions*; or how reasons, motives, and arguments, which are mere *abstract notions*, can be the *physical, necessary, and efficient cause* of action? May not an *abstract notion* as well *strike a ball*, as be the *efficient cause* of motion in a man's body? occasions indeed they may be, and are, upon which that substance in man, wherein the *self-moving principle* resides, freely exerts its active power. But it is the *self-moving principle*, and not at all the *reason* or *motive*, which is the *physical* or *efficient cause* of action. When we say, in *vulgar speech*, that *motives* or *reasons* DETERMINE a man: it is nothing but a mere *figure* or *metaphor*. It is the man that *freely determines* himself to act: *reasons*, or *perceptions* of the understanding, can no more (properly and strictly speaking) determine an action, than an *abstract notion* can be a *substance* or *agent*, or can *strike* or *move* a piece of matter. For understanding, or judgment, or approbation, or liking, or whatever name you please to call it by, can no more possibly be the *efficient cause* of action, than *rest* can be the *cause* of motion. Nothing can possibly be the *cause* of an effect more considerable than *itself*.

called volitions, he assigns causes that he conceives to be more probable and more adequate in themselves to *produce* volitions, than those ideal things called motives: viz. the agents, whose acts they are acknowledged to

“ Nothing that is *passive*, can possibly be the *cause* of “ any thing that is *active*.” (Clarke’s answer to Collins. Lond. 1717. p. 11, 10, 9.)

As far as *abstract* argument can go, this seems to me a fair statement of the question; and it is, moreover, full as good an answer, as the assumptions and casuistry of those on the other side deserve. I confess, however, that this being a dispute concerning a matter of fact; viz. what is the nature of man—is he, or is he not, a *necessitated* being?—it seems to me, that the most satisfactory, as well as the most philosophical method of determining it, is by experiment; that is, by the appeal to consciousness. Considered, however, in this point of view, there is enough in the arguments just quoted, to throw the *onus probandi* on the assertors of Moral Necessity: and to make it incumbent on them, to prove by *actual experiment*, that their very improbable (not to say impossible) assertions, are something more than assertions; and that those *abstract* things, called motives, can be applied to living beings, as *efficient* and *necessitating causes*, in producing and determining volitions and motions, in as *absolute* and *irresistible* a manner, as *mechanical* or *physical causes* produce their constant effects: which is a position, that, in my opinion, they cannot prove by *facts*: since it appears to me, as I have before stated, to be so decidedly opposed to those moral and physical phenomena, that we experience within ourselves individually; and to all the indications of the universality of such phenomena, which are deducible from the maxims and conduct—the social and political regulations of mankind.

be, and without whose agency, it must in any scheme, be allowed, that they could not exist. And whereas the Necessarian defends his view, solely by abstract argument; his opponent appeals to experience and consciousness; asserting that he *feels* that he is not *necessarily* or *unavoidably* determined by any motives, in willing or choosing; but that he can consider and re-consider them, and that after all, it is *he himself*, and not the motives, that wills, chooses, and determines; though he acknowledges, that he *ought* to will and choose those things, that reason points out to him, as the most fit and proper. ⁵

⁵ Thus, the advocate for liberty admits, that effects must have causes: Judging, however, *not* from *speculation*, but from those things which he *knows best*—his own feelings and consciousness—he finds that the causes of volitions, are those intellectual agents, whose mental acts *all* parties admit them to be: whereas the Necessarian rejects with disdain—as totally inadequate to his exalted notion of a cause—the idea, that real agents are the causes or producers of their *own* acts; and pompously announces to us, that certain nonentities called motives, are more adequate to their causation or production.

Now, it must be admitted on all sides, that a mere *motive* never could *alone* and of itself, produce a volition *without* the *co-existence* of some mental agent. So that were all such agents destroyed, all volitions must cease. Whereas, the absence of all motives whatsoever, could not infer the destruction, either of the agents themselves, or of their powers of acting; and, therefore, could not render it *impossible*, that they should act or produce volitions, in the absence of such motives. Even then, in abstract argument, it might be fairly asked, which is the

How then, is the argument for the being of a God, less convincing to the advocate of liberty? Does his consciousness of willing or choosing, guide him to any different result, from his consciousness of reflecting, reasoning, &c.? Does the former, any more than the latter, mislead him to fancy, either that he himself is *uncaused*, or that he is *self-caused*—that he is *uncreated* or *self-created*? He can answer from *experience*,

most probable cause to assign, as producing an act or volition; its acknowledged agent a real being; or that ideal thing, a motive—an agent; of whom it is not impossible to suppose, that he might produce a volition, in the absence of all motive—or a motive; of which it is evidently impossible to imagine, that it should *of itself* produce a volition, without the co-existence of some mental agent.

In answer to this obvious and natural reasoning, Necessarians resort to a curious evasion. They argue that, even were they to admit agents to be the causes of their own acts, yet, they would still require us, to assign *other* causes why they should act in *one* particular way, rather than in any other. (Crombie, p. 9. Edwards, part 2, sect. 4.)

Now, it is quite obvious, that if they act or will at all, they must act or will in *one* way at a time, and not in every way, nor in opposite ways. Just as a being endowed with the powers of locomotion, must, if he move at all, move in *one* direction at a time, and not in every direction, nor in opposite directions. To say, then, that agents may be endowed with a power of causing or originating action or volition in *general*; but not with a power of originating any *particular* action or volition—or, to say, that a being may have a power of generating motion in general; but no power of generating any par-

that it generates in his mind no such preposterous notions. If not, he then argues from effects to causes—that there must be a Being, who has created him, with *all* his powers of *willing*, reflecting, &c. and so according to the usual reasoning, he ascends to a First Cause of all. Now, let any one state the argument for the Being of a God, on the Necessarian hypothesis; and show, how such hypothesis adds thereto,

ticular motion, that is, in any particular direction; is to assert distinctions, of which, I must confess, that I cannot form any clear conception; and which seem to me, no better than verbal quibbles; or attempts to retract, under one form of expression, what has been conceded under another.

Indeed, if there be *any* meaning in such an expression, as, *motion in general*, when distinguished from particular motions: I suppose it must mean, motion deprived of any *particular* direction; which, from the very *nature* of motion, is evidently, an impossible thing. To admit, therefore, that agents *may* possess the power of generating the former, but *not* the latter, is to admit an impossibility, and to deny a possibility:—and the same may be said of the attempt to distinguish between the power of originating volitions in general, and that of originating any particular volition.—But it is unnecessary to pursue the subject further.

It seems to me, then, quite answer enough, to repeat the argument already used, which is not limited by any such unintelligible distinctions; and by which, it appears much more reasonable and natural, to ascribe the causation or production of *particular* acts or volitions, to those agents whose acts they are, and without whom, it must be admitted that they could not be produced at all; than to motives, which are evidently inadequate in themselves

either strength or perspicuity. For my own part, I cannot perceive how it does either: on the contrary, it seems to me, that it has a manifest tendency, to cloud and confuse it.

For, in the first place,—it *sets aside consciousness* as the proper judge of the *facts* of the case, and thereby opens the door to endless *speculations*, well calculated to render Natural Theology totally unintelligible to mankind.

alone to produce them, *without* the co-existence of such agents.

The truth is, as I have observed before, that the whole difficulty arises from this; that we cannot either understand or explain, *how* we will or determine; any more than *how* we move. We can *feel*, and therefore we assert, that we can move of ourselves; but cannot tell *how*. And in the same way, we *feel*, and therefore assert, that we can will or determine of ourselves; but cannot explain *how*. And it seems to me, that whoever, on EITHER side, attempts more than this, does indeed undertake an *impossible* task; and may, therefore, be driven by his opponents, into endless inconsistencies.

On this account, I set but little value on the foregoing, or upon any other *abstract* arguments, that have been advanced on *either* side of this controversy. I believe, that there is no truly safe or philosophical guide, but *experience*. And this tells us, that it is we ourselves, and not motives, who will and act; which is sufficient proof to us, that we are the *causes* of our own volitions and actions. And the same experience teaches us, that on many occasions we might will and act, *otherwise* than we do; which is enough to convince us, that we are *not necessitated*; but are truly accountable, both for our determinations or intentions, and for our actual conduct.

Secondly—it argues that there cannot be *any such thing* as a mental agent, capable of willing or determining of himself; or in other words, that God cannot create such a Being: (though the consent of the greater part of mankind, testifies to the fact, that we are ourselves such Beings:) which is imposing on Omnipotence, a most unnecessary and degrading limitation. The proof, therefore, of the existence and attributes of the Deity, which involves the necessity of such a limitation, is surely not more calculated, to establish or to exalt our notions of the Great First Cause, than that which is free from it.

Thirdly—The arguments that are adduced to prove that there can be *no Being* capable of willing or choosing of himself, are of such a *general* character, that if they be conclusive at all, they must be so with regard to *all beings*, whatever—even the Deity himself. So that we must believe of Him, that *He* cannot will or choose of Himself; but that there must be *other* producing causes of His volitions, besides Himself. Now these causes, whatever they be, must be as *eternal* as *His volitions*, that is, as Himself: so that in truth, *He* is *not* the Great *First* Cause; but at best only *coeval*, and *co-operative* with *other* causes, which, according to this view, are, in a certain sense, the primary causes of every thing: since they *cause His volitions*, which cause all things. ⁶ This notion of the

⁶ If there *must* be *causes* of the Divine volitions, *other* than the *Deity himself*, it may fairly be asked, what are the *causes* of these *causes*? And so on, till we come to a *first* cause *different* from the Deity himself; or else, admit of an *eternal* series, which, (whether it's links be all denominated causes, or all effects,) must have, on *this* supposition, an

Deity, let those espouse, who can persuade themselves, that it is more intelligible, or more worthy of Him, than the other. It seems then to me, that this hypothesis, instead of assisting to establish, or to simplify the proof of the existence and attributes of the Great First Cause, does in fact perplex and confuse it; and that, moreover, to such a degree, as to render it quite unintelligible by, and therefore useless to, the *bulk* of practical men.

On the whole, I cannot but esteem it highly presumptuous, to pronounce so dogmatically on the nature of those intellectual beings, concerning whose various capabilities, we have evidently no *experimental* knowledge whatever. And it seems to me, as unphilosophical in our own case, as it is presumptuous in that of *unknown* beings, to substitute abstract argument and

independent and *necessary* existence of it's own; so that the Deity could not be the Great First Cause. If, to evade this difficulty, it be admitted that the *Deity* may have the power to *originate* volitions; then, in the *first* place, those arguments, which pretended to prove the *general* impossibility of this power in *any* case, must be abandoned; and something *peculiar* to the nature of mortals, must be assumed as grounds of the demonstration; that is, *Moral Necessity* must be given up and *Physical Necessity* (Materialism,) must be substituted; with which I am not at present concerned. And in the *next* place, this power, since the Deity would possess it, and since there is in it *nothing* of the character of *Infinity*, must be admitted to be *communicable*—and then, the only question remaining, would be one of *fact*; whether it *has been* communicated to *Man*? How much wiser, how much simpler, and how much more Philosophical, to *begin* with *facts*, than to plunge into this sea of difficulties and abstractions!

metaphysical speculations, for that experience, which can alone decide the matter: and of which, consciousness is the only adequate judge. To this tribunal, therefore, as the final resort, I conceive that the appeal must be submitted; and that the decision must be awarded, not by a few theorists, but by the majority of practical and sensible men.

Of so much consequence, has the appeal to consciousness been always esteemed, that in the latter stages of the controversy, several eminent advocates of Necessity, have attempted to claim it's verdict, as favourable to their own opinion.⁷ In following up this attempt, it seems to me, that they have greatly misrepresented the nature of its testimony. It would be impossible, without considerably exceeding the limits which I have prescribed to myself, to give even a compendium of their statements, and of the refutations, by which, as I conceive, they have been, or may be fairly met. I shall, therefore, only offer a few general observations on the subject.

In the *first* place: The length of time that elapsed before the attempt was made by Necessitarians; and

⁷ " But this appeal to consciousness, in proof of Free Agency, proceeds altogether, (according to some *late* writers) on a partial and superficial view of the subject; the evidence of consciousness, when all circumstances are taken into the account and duly weighed, being decidedly in favour of the scheme of Necessity. Dr. Hartly was, I believe one of the first, (if not the first,) who denied that our consciousness is in favour of our Free Agency." (Stewart's Active and Moral powers, V. ii. p. 510.)

during which, they opposed to this appeal, nothing but metaphysical speculations; is in itself, a pretty plain proof, that such an appeal, was admitted even by themselves, to be unfavourable to their cause; or in other words, that the prevailing opinions—the natural feelings—the practical conclusions of the bulk of mankind, were repugnant to their views:—in short, that the testimony of consciousness was obviously against them. Now, to set about proving by argument that this testimony—previously admitted to be unfavourable to them—was on their side, was nothing better, than an attempt to disprove the existence, of an *acknowledged fact*. And whatever ingenuity may have been displayed in the effort, the utmost that can be conceded to mere argument is, to renew the investigation as to the *fact* whose *existence* is questioned; that is, in the case under consideration—to repeat the appeal to consciousness; and to call on mankind for a reconsidered verdict: and this has been in fact done by *their* renewal of the controversy.

To show then, that their arguments possessed any validity—any accordance with the nature of things—it should be proved, that they had *succeeded* in *altering* the testimony of consciousness in this matter. But I am yet to learn, that the ordinary practice—the prevalent maxims—the social and political regulations of mankind—in short, all those general results, which, embody, as it were, and exhibit the verdict of consciousness on this subject,—I have yet to learn that these have undergone any material change, or indeed any change at all—in consequence of the arguments alluded to.

In the *second* place; I may observe, that although they profess their readiness to abide by the result of this

appeal; yet they do in fact—and at the very same time—evade and disown it. For they pretend, that but few are competent witnesses in this case; and, that those few ought first to be initiated in their metaphysical mysteries, before they be allowed to entertain or to pronounce on the question. And, by such stipulations as these, they endeavour to exclude from the decision, the suffrages of the majority of mankind: or in other words, at the very moment that they affect to call for a *general* verdict, they seek to anticipate and to set it aside.

Who indeed ever heard before, that any inquiry into the *general* properties of human nature, whether mental or physical, was to be restricted to the bodies or minds of the Literati and Virtuosi—the Metaphysician, and Logician? What Physiologist would confine himself within such limits, while investigating the nature of the human constitution, or the texture of the human frame? and what better reason can be urged for placing such restrictions on any inquiry into the moral and active powers of our species? Are not these powers, as busily engaged, as fully developed in the details of practical life, as in those of casuistry or meditation? Is not the exercise of energy and forbearance, of self determination and self control, as much called for, in the pursuits of trade or of agriculture—in the bustling scenes of the forum, the cabinet, or the camp; as in the retirement of the cloister or the closet? and are not persons so engaged, just as conscious as any others, of what they *feel* in themselves—of what capabilities they possess—and what powers they exercise? In truth, they are much more likely to give an *unbiassed* and *practical* testimony in this matter: and it is quite proverbial, that men of business, and men of the world, are better ac-

quainted with human nature ; and more competent judges of it's capabilities, and of it's tendencies ; and better qualified to influence and direct them, than mere theorists or speculators. There is, therefore, no ground that I can perceive, for excluding their testimony in the appeal to consciousness.

Lastly ; To dwell no longer on a subject, so fully and so ably handled by others ; it is too generally assumed by Necessarians, that the advocates of Free Will contend, that this faculty exists in *equal* vigour in all men ; and in the same men at all times. And as it is easy to produce instances, where the conduct of individuals warrants the conclusion, that they are *not* free agents, but the mere slaves of caprice or passion ; so, it is argued from such cases, that there is no such thing as this Free Will ; and that no man has his own feelings, wishes, or conduct in his own power.

But in truth, the opponents of Necessity, do not, either by their arguments, or by their assertions, support any such position ; no more than they maintain, that all men are *equally* endowed with the reasoning faculty, or that the same men are *equally* rational at all times. Indeed, it would be contrary both to experience and to analogy, to suppose, that this gift of God should be exempt from that variety, which is evident in all the other faculties, with which it hath pleased Him to endow human nature. And, in the next place, though it be fully admitted, that in the cases alluded to, the individuals have bartered their free agency, for the service of some ruling propensity ; yet it does not follow, that they *never* possessed it in *any* degree ; and much less, that the character of all other men, is to be judged of by their standard. To confine our attention to them, is to in-

stitute but a restricted and inconclusive experiment. To be impartial, it should be general; and to be just—even in the cases in question—it should extend to their *whole* lives: for there are few, however degraded, who will not acknowledge, that there *was a time* when they might have both willed and acted *otherwise* than they did; and might thus have escaped the miserable bondage, into which they have surrendered themselves.

In short, there seems no reason, why that moral power, by which man exercises self determination or self control, should not like all the other gifts of God, be susceptible of improvement or deterioration, according as it is cultivated or abused—according on the one hand, as it is strengthened by proper exercise, and exalted by an alliance with reason and religion; or on the other, as it is weakened by neglect, perverted by the indulgence of caprice, or subjugated to the domineering dominion of vice. Accordingly, the cases alluded to, are generally regarded by the wise and virtuous, as instances of moral degradation,—instances, where continued transgression has engendered *habits* strong as fetters,—where the will has gradually lost its proper predominance, and yielded up the empire of the man to usurping passions.⁸

Yet, it is remarkable, that according to the scheme of moral necessity, which places the greatest exercise of freedom, in the most unrestrained indulgence of the

⁸ “Mankind,” says Paley, “act more from *habit* than “reflection.” * * “If we are in so great a degree, passive “under our habits, where, it is asked, is the exercise of “virtue, the guilt of vice, or any use of moral or religious “knowledge? I answer,—In the *forming* and *contracting* “of these habits.” Mor. Phils. Book I. c. 7.)

strongest motive or impulse, these very persons would exhibit, the best samples of true liberty.

Thus, a late author explaining the system adopted by modern Calvinists, describes *their* Necessity, as “the natural accompaniment of that *freedom* with which a man *chooses according* to the *disposition* of his mind, and the *view* which he takes of the *objects presented* to him.” * * * “These notions of necessity and freedom go hand in hand—they stand or fall together; and the *degree* of a man’s *freedom*, in a certain sense *rises* in exact *proportion* to the *strength* of this *necessity*. The more *powerful the tendency of taste, and the influence of external inducements*, the more *vigorous* is the *freedom* with which an agent exercises his volitions.”⁹ According to this theory; the wretched victim of licentiousness, when sufficiently roused by *external inducements*,—the infatuated votary of ambition, when a vacant throne arises to his maddening view; exhibit the most vigorous freedom, with which an agent exercises his volitions. Yet, according to ordinary language and feeling, they would be regarded by all the wise and virtuous—by all those who were not under the same infatuating influences; as the deluded and miserable slaves of lust and passion.

⁹ Gilb. Mem. Will. p. 563. In like manner Toplady. “Whatever the soul does, with the *full bent* of preference and *desire*, in that, the soul acts freely.” (Neces. p. 10.) I should say, on the contrary, that those who cultivate morality of life will admit; that the more they can rise superior to the impulses of inclination, and the force of passion; the more they feel themselves at liberty, to regulate their determinations and conduct, according to the dictates of reason, the suggestions of conscience, and the laws of God.

They may call this Necessity if they will; but how can they call it moral or philosophical *Freedom*? And if it be Necessity, it is produced by the fault of the individual. It is not the *simple* production of creation; neither is it the necessary, (though it may be the probable) result of creation, combined with the circumstances, in which he has been placed. For, as I have already observed, there are very few of the cases alluded to, in which the individuals themselves, will not acknowledge, that there *was* a period of their lives, when these habits were not inveterate; and when they might have both lived, and acted, *otherwise* than they did; and, that to such an extent, as to have escaped the miserable thralldom, in which they have been involved.

On the whole, it seems to me, that the testimony of consciousness, and all the *indications* of that testimony, which are to be found in the language, laws, maxims, and opinions of mankind, are repugnant to *all* the various theories of Necessity.

But, whatever may be result of the appeal to consciousness, this much, at all events, must be admitted, on the principles of sound and *experimental* philosophy; that it is by such appeal, that the question must be *ultimately* decided. For the inquiry is, what the nature of man actually is, not what it *ought* to be, nor what it *must* be: and this as has been already observed, must be determined by experiment, not by hypothesis or speculation.

Wherefore; whenever a man of plain understanding finds himself puzzled by such metaphysical subtilties, as those alluded to, he is, I conceive, perfectly authorized to reject them, (at least in his *own case*,) on the *testimony*

of his own *feelings* and *consciousness*, for these are the things *best known* to him; and therefore, he can have no surer, no safer criterion, of what really is the constitution of his *own* nature.

But it may, and it 'has been objected by a most respectable writer, to those, who without attempting to discuss Edward's argument, set it down as nothing more than an intricate puzzle or quibble,' that, "if this argument be what they represent it, there must be some way to unravel the puzzle, although they have not the skill, or will not take the trouble to discover it."

'To this proposition,' 'I object, 1st, Because I can see little or nothing in the argument of Edwards, which has not been completely answered by Clarke or by Reid. 2nd, Because the consequences to which it leads, (although to the satisfaction of a few speculative men, they may perhaps be evaded by means of subtle refinements and distinctions,) are so directly *contrary* to the *common feelings* and *judgments* of mankind, as to authorize any person of plain understanding boldly to *cut asunder the knot*, which he was unable to unloose. In looking over the article *Sophisms* in our elementary books of logic, I find many (such as *Achilles* and the *Tortoise*, the *Liar*, the *Bald*, the *Sorites* or *Acervus*, and various others,) to which I should be much more at a loss to give a satisfactory reply, than to any thing alleged by Collins or Edwards; and yet I should think it a most unwise employment of my time to waste an hour in the refutation of any of them. Nor would I feel much mortification if I should be accused of want of candour for neither consenting to admit the conclusion, nor to undertake the irksome task of combating the premises.

“ Of the truths *disputed* in these sophisms, there is not one
 “ in my opinion more *certain* than that of man’s free
 “ agency; a fact of which our consciousness is so com-
 “ plete, that we cannot even form a conception of a
 “ more perfect freedom of choice than we actually pos-
 “ sess. On this point it has been justly and acutely
 “ remarked by Mr. Necker, that “ when we reflect
 “ upon our faculties, we can with ease imagine a supe-
 “ rior degree of intelligence, of knowledge, of memory,
 “ of foresight, and of every other property of our un-
 “ derstanding; liberty is the only part of ourselves to
 “ which imagination cannot add any thing.” ⁽¹⁾

In addition to these judicious observations, I may be permitted to repeat, with reference to the foregoing *practical* and *instinctive rejection*, of such speculations, as those of Collins, Edward, &c. &c. that, it is not merely “ to cut the knot,” but it is indeed to give, the only true, and philosophical answer, to all such metaphysical subtilties: and that he who should attempt any other, would only be imitating the error of his opponents, in substituting abstract argument, for practical investigation. When, therefore, such casuistry is used, to prove to me, that I am *not* a free agent; the true reply is, “ I *feel* that I am.” When fancied demonstrations are adduced to show, that I cannot, in *any* case, will or act *otherwise* than I do; the legitimate, the philosophical

¹ Stewart’s Act. and Mor. Pow^s. V. 2. P. 518. The Author adds in a note, “ on the subject of such sophisms “ as Achilles and the Tortoise, many books we are told “ were written, and various individuals are mentioned, “ who fell into fatal diseases, or died of grief, in conse- “ quence of their fruitless endeavours to clear up the “ mystery.”

refutation is, I am *conscious* that I can. It is, in short, the answer in *this case*; of *experiment* to speculation—of *fact* to hypothesis.²

² All this, I again repeat, refers only to natural things. Nor need the most jealous advocate of the *true* doctrines of Grace, (too often *confounded* with the *peculiarities* of Calvinism) be alarmed at this assertion of *Free Agency*. For the same *practical* test here adduced to prove the one, will equally and experimentally prove the other: Where, indeed, is the pious Christian, who has sought to conform himself, not merely to external decency of morals, but to pure affections and holy desires—who, has even thought of the possibility of loving “God with all his heart, and all his soul, and all his mind, and all his strength,” (Luke x. 27.) and has not immediately felt—practically, lamentably felt—that in this, the powers of *mere* human nature failed him—that here, he could neither “will nor do” of his own self, (Phil. ii. 13.)—that here, all his “sufficiency” must be “of God,” (1 Cor. iii. 5.)—that for this, he must look up to him, “from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed,” (2nd Col. Eve. Pray.) even “the Father of light,” from whom “cometh down every good and every perfect gift,” “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James i. 17.)

The testimony of consciousness is equally clear—equally experimental in this case, as in the other. And he, who, out of rash and mistaken zeal for any human system, will consent to abandon in either, this firm footing of practical conviction—those things which he *knows best*, which he feels most sensibly—may soon be driven—in argument at least, and for consistency sake—to deny it in both: and to admit with Priestly, Belsham, &c. that “*remorse is a fallacious feeling*, (Belsh^m, Elm^s, London, 1801, P. 284,) that,

VIII. I shall close this appendix with one or two extracts, to show, that some, even of those who have advocated necessity on *abstract* grounds, have to a

“ in a degree it is even pernicious,” (Ibid. 406,) with Priestly that a Necessitarian has “ nothing to do with *repentance*, “ *confession* or *pardon*, which are all adapted to a different, imperfect, and *fallacious* view of things”!!! (Supra. p. 18. Note.) Thus dangerous is it, to separate sound philosophy from true religion; or to imagine, that the *practical* proofs of the one can be abandoned, without affecting those of the other.

I may be allowed to add another remark in this place, though not strictly connected with my subject. Does not revelation itself, in its efforts to convince and persuade men, make frequent use of appeals, similar to those, which I have recommended as tests in natural religion? Do not the Scriptures appeal to our conscience, our consciousness, and our common sense, as so many witnesses in its favour; thus practically and experimentally unavailing our hearts, disclosing our thoughts, and sharper than “ a two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit;” (Heb. iv. 12.) till we are ready to acknowledge, with her of Samaria, that it must be God that speaketh, since he has told us all things that ever we did or thought. (John iv. 29.) The unlettered and ignorant, who have not miracles to convince them, and who are incapable of examining the arguments, in favour of the authenticity and integrity of the Holy Records; must, to a considerable extent at least, make use of these tests, to ascertain what doctrines do indeed *correspond* to the *realities*, and suit the *wants* of human nature. And, this is one reason, why they often come nearer the truth, than the wise and learned of this world. Unsophisticated by false philosophy, and vain speculations; “ to the poor is the “ Gospel preached,” and in general they “ hear it gladly.”

certain extent, admitted, that the testimony of consciousness is unfavourable to it.

Mr. Locke, while engrossed in *Metaphysical* considerations, seems to go great lengths, in the scheme of necessity. But when he expresses his *feelings* and *convictions*, he seems to incline the other way. In his correspondence with Mr. Molineux, speaking with reference to his chapter on power, he says; “if I have
“put any fallacy on myself, in all that deduction, as
“it may be, and I have been ready to suspect it myself,
“you will do me a very acceptable kindness to shew it
“me, that I may reform it. But if you will argue for or
“against, liberty from consequences, I will not under-
“take to answer you. For I own freely to you the *weak-*
“*ness* of my understanding, that though it be *unques-*
“*tionable*, that there is omnipotence and omniscience in
“God, our maker; and I cannot have a *clearer percep-*
“*tion* of any thing, than that *I am free*; yet I cannot
“make freedom in man consistent with omnipotence and
“omniscience in God; though I am as *fully persuaded*
“of *both*, as of any truths I must firmly assent to. And,
“therefore, I have long since given off the consideration
“of that question, resolving all into this short conclusion;
“that if it be *possible* for God to make a free agent, then
“man is free, though I see not the way of it.”³

With all deference to the opinion of such a man as Locke, I must confess, that to me it seems much more philosophical and legitimate, to inquire, by an examination of *facts*, what God *has done*, than to attempt to determine by *our* puny reasonings, in any *doubtful* case—in any case which is not subject matter of *strict demonstration*—what HE *can* or *cannot* do. And that therefore,

³ Works, Lond. 1759. V. iii. P. 487.

the *true* question in this case is, whether God has *actually* made man free. And this, as has been already so often observed, must be determined by the testimony of consciousness: a testimony, which Locke has pronounced in his own case, to be decidedly in favour of Free Agency, ranking it with his very *clearest perceptions*.

Similar admissions of much *less candid* writers might be adduced. For example, that already quoted, P. 18, 19 Note. And, in reference to the reasonings there cited, it may in general be remarked, that all the attempts of Necessitarians, to prove that *remorse* is a *fallacious feeling*, are in fact so many admissions, that this feeling is *against* them. And yet it seems to me, that the existence of this irresistible feeling on various occasions in the human bosom, and its acknowledgment by the majority of mankind, are no inconsiderable proofs, that they regard themselves and one another, not as *necessitated*, but as *free* Moral Agents. I acknowledge, that these ominous endeavours to undermine and explode a feeling, that lies at the foundation of repentance and conversion, are chiefly confined to the advocates of *Physical* necessity. But, I cannot help remarking, that it is not by any thing *peculiar* to *their* system that they fortify themselves in this attempt; but by arguments that are sufficient proofs, that *any* scheme of necessity is equally incompatible with the recognition of this important feeling: though the genuine piety of most Calvinistic supporters of the Necessitarian Hypothesis, would lead them to shrink with abhorrence, from any participation in so demoralizing an assault, on the purity and integrity of conscience. Accordingly, we find a candid writer, already alluded to, driven to acknowledge, that even Moral Necessity must lead to this conclusion; and forced, in order to escape so monstrous a result,

to appeal to consciousness, and to all our moral maxims and convictions, and thus practically, though not avowedly, to abandon his entire scheme.

“Suppose,” says Dean Milner, “a created being in “the *first* moment of his existence to be placed on this “globe which we inhabit, with all his faculties entire, “and to make a particular choice;—it is evident that “there is a sense” (according to this Hypothesis,) “in “which this first choice *cannot be said to be his own*, “or to *be produced by himself*; it is the effect of external motives, of an internal principle, or of the combined operation of both: but this Being, by the “supposition, neither *created* his own disposition, nor “the objects with which he is surrounded:—*the inference is obvious*.—We may further add, that as far “as this single volition may be supposed to constitute “the *beginning* of a *habit*, and to have *affected* the “*original temper*, so far this Being *cannot properly be “called the efficient cause* of the *alteration* of his “disposition. Thus the *next* volition that he makes “will be *no more his own* than the first; and by proceeding in this manner, it will plainly appear that “every succeeding volition is the *necessary result* of “motives and causes which were *constituted* by some “*superior power*; and by their continued operation; “produce a most wonderful variety of thoughts and “resolutions.”

“This argument, which I think cannot reasonably “be suspected of sophism, is the natural growth of a “deep inquiry into the origin of evil, and gives rise to “a sceptical consideration of the last importance. Is “there any such thing as *virtue or vice* in the world? “Both the Calvinist and the Arminian seem all along “to have taken this for granted.” *** “But perhaps a

“*dependent creature is incapable of merit or blame;—*
 “*perhaps it implies a contradiction in the nature of*
 “*things, to suppose that the Supreme Being, who is*
 “*himself the fountain of existence, should create a*
 “*virtuous or a vicious being.*”

“Not to dissemble in a matter of such vast moment—
 “I do not know how, such a conclusion could be avoided,
 “if God had not deeply implanted in our nature a strong
 “sense of right and wrong—if conscience did not incessantly
 “accuse or approve our proceedings, with a silent
 “but powerful eloquence. In common life we meet with
 “few practical difficulties on this head. It is when we
 “retire into our closets, and turn speculative Philosophers,
 “that we doubt of every thing. We consider
 “our actions as so many effects; we connect them with
 “the preceding causes: and mounting up step by step
 “to the Supreme Author of all things, we feel ourselves
 “inclined to ascribe all praise or blame to him. But
 “we are unable to maintain this dangerous sentiment for
 “a moment. What, no duties! no guilt! The internal
 “monitor, steps in at the crisis; commands our
 “whole attention; forbids the hasty inference, and
 “marks the great outlines of obligation with a convincing
 “precision.”

“This reasoning will not appear more extraordinary
 “to the reader, than it did to the writer of this Essay,
 “when it first occurred to him. On a careful review of
 “the whole, he cannot but think that conscience, as distinguished
 “from the understanding, is the natural guardian of virtue.—Mere
 “human reasoning seems insufficient to discover the true essence
 “of Morality, or to establish its foundations; and the Omniscient
 “Creator has wisely secured us from the precarious determinations
 “of so imperfect a faculty.”

“ We *abuse* our *noblest endowments*, when we *profanely reject* the *dictates of conscience*, and suppose them to be delusive admonitions, because we cannot clearly perceive the necessity of moral relations;—we *use them* as we *ought*, when we are disposed to *receive implicitly* the *intimations* which *they afford us of the Divine Will*.”⁴ Such arguments as these, must, I think, when pressed on the undoubted piety of modern Calvinists, show them, the dangerous and monstrous tendency, of *every* scheme of Necessity; and induce them, to abandon such unprofitable speculations; and to *acquiesce implicitly in Revelation*, and in those *convictions*, which *conscience enlightened by Revelation*, furnishes to the most *illiterate Christian*. To bring matters to this *practical* conclusion, should, as it seems to me, be the *main* object of all Natural Theology.

⁴ Essay on Liberty, 124—129.

ADDITIONAL NOTE

TO

APPENDIX I.

I have much pleasure in making the following extracts from a very able publication, (put into my hands since the foregoing pages were struck off,) which may be read in continuation of Art. V. at page 117. “ Resuming then, the “ combined doctrine of Divine Prescience, and human “ Liberty, I must observe, that the difficulty which we “ may experience in *reconciling* the one of these principles “ with the other, cannot justify us in *rejecting* either. *Each* “ of them is *established* upon a *competent evidence*. There are “ proofs in *prophecy*, of God’s foreknowledge of man’s ac- “ tions. The liberty of those actions is proved by many “ media : by our *personal consciousness* ; by the conditions of “ revealed religion ; by all laws human and divine ; by the “ *common sense* of mankind, whose judgments and language “ are framed, not merely on the admission of this principle, “ but on rules of *taking an account* of it. It is further proved “ by the strictest reasoning of the best philosophers, who “ have asserted it, and by the *concessions* of others who “ have denied it: for the reasoner, who denies human “ liberty, never fails in his life, to deal with others as “ though they possessed it, and proves himself so far free “ as the greatest inconsistency can shew him to be. In a

“ word, religion, laws, internal consciousness, society, all
 “ verify this doctrine. Consequently, although it may not
 “ be impossible to impugn it by some of our purblind
 “ speculative objections, yet the denial of it can never be
 “ made without a great and manifest difficulty, and that
 “ difficulty pressing upon us in the strongest relations of
 “ our whole nature and being. But such a difficulty must
 “ be reckoned as *equivalent* to a *practical* refutation of the
 “ system which includes it. *Each*, therefore, being sup-
 “ posed as distinctly *proved*, God’s prescience, and man’s
 “ freedom ; if their union and consistency *pass* our *compre-*
 “ *hension*, that will be no ground why we should reject
 “ the *first* things *proved* by reasons which we *do comprehend*.
 “ That would be for our *ignorance* to *refute* our *knowledge*.”

“ For where does the *difficulty* in this second case *originate* ?
 “ where is it situated? It originates in a *province* of *thought*,
 “ wherein our *notions* confessedly are *inadequate* and *imperfect* ;
 “ in our *estimate* of the *divine nature* and the *infinite* *perfections*
 “ of *God*. Without insisting upon what might be very justly
 “ said, that in many of our speculations concerning the Deity,
 “ and the extent and capacity, if I may so speak, of his
 “ *perfections*, it is even reasonable to expect great, and per-
 “ haps overpowering difficulties ; I ask, whether the sense of
 “ such difficulties, when perceived, can be allowed to be a
 “ *sufficient answer* to *other conclusions*, presented to us in
 “ *direct* and *convincing* evidence ; or whether it be not wiser
 “ to think that the infinity of the divine Being, and the
 “ vastness of his attributes, are the *true* reason of the in-
 “ tricacy under which we view many questions relating
 “ to him, and to the exercise whether of his knowledge,
 “ or of his power. It CONTRADICTS *many axioms* of our
 “ *most certain knowledge*, to *deny* man to be a *Free Agent*.
 “ But it *contradicts* no such *axiom*, to admit, that of free and
 “ undetermined actions, an infinite being may have an
 “ infallible foresight ; *how* this can be, is a hard and mys-
 “ terious point : it may be an absolutely insolvable enigma

"to our understanding. But it is only an enigma. The
 "contradiction in it has not been shown. And to use the
 "strict philosophick distinction of Clarke, applied by him
 "in another case, '*absurdities, contradictions, disagreement*
 "*of ideas*, are things just as different from *difficult conse-*
 "*quences of demonstrative truths*, which cannot be perfectly
 "cleared, as light from darkness."—(Davidson on Pro-
 "phesy. 2nd Edn. P. 381.)—"One remark more I shall
 "offer upon the abstract question under discussion. If we
 "begin our speculation by saying, since God foresees the
 "the action, and already beholds it, how can it be free;
 "we attempt to look through the immensity of the divine mind,
 "and place ourselves on a height far above the level of our
 "faculties. But if we begin from below, by supposing our
 "actions to be free, as we have the best reason to suppose,
 "then the creed of natural piety, and the conviction of
 "the infinite and unlimited scope of the divine intelligence,
 "will more readily help us into an apprehension of the
 "article, and an acquiescence in it. And this is a mode
 "of consideration which I suggest, partly after an idea of
 "Origin, as deserving to be kept in view, whilst we at-
 "tempt to explain this question." (Ibid. 395.)—"Perhaps
 "it is not impossible to suggest one cause, which, I think,
 "contributes its share to some erroneous, but certainly
 "inconsequent opinions, concerning the divine attributes.
 "It is this; since *infinities*, taken in their *whole* nature,
 "are clearly something above our comprehension, it comes
 "to be thought, that we may assume almost any, or at
 "least very *arbitrary* notions respecting them. But moral
 "infinities, as well as mathematical; moral modes in their
 "highest, as well as modes of quantity in its unlimited
 "extent; are subject to some rules of discourse, when we
 "discourse of them all; and one rule is, that in passing up
 "the scale of the finite subject, in order to approach the
 "properties of the infinite, we must pursue the *enlarged*
 "*idea* taken from the *properties* of the *first*, and not adopt

“ the *contradictory*, or any *alien* idea, to make the *approximation* to the infinite in question.”

“ Thus—they who have assigned to the *divine* justice or mercy, qualities, or operations, *contradictory* to, or *alien* from the *highest* and *best* notions of *human* justice or mercy, have sometimes appealed to the *infiniteness* of the divine nature, and sought to defend their opinions by it. But that appeal is unduly made. The *infiniteness* of that *supreme excellence*, which is in God, renders the *contradictory* of the *human* virtues the *less credible* in Him. That infinity of perfection is, indeed, an intense argument *against* the opinions so defended. And this is the view which we are taught to take of the divine nature, by him who best knew its immeasurable perfections, and how to direct us in our thoughts concerning it. “ If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how *much more* shall your Father which is in heaven, give good gifts to them that ask him.”—(Matt. vii, 9, 10, 11.)—(Ibid. 548.)

APPENDIX II.

Absolute Predestination, and Necessity, not True Criteria of Gospel Faith.

WHEN the soul is first awakened, to a sense of its own weakness, wants, and wretchedness; and commences a trembling and anxious search, after “the pearl of great price:” it becomes naturally and properly desirous, of implicitly submitting itself, to the declarations of divine truth. But often, in the impatience of delay, and in the haste to reach at once the desired conclusions; it is too apt to admit, without careful examination, and almost upon credit, the assertions of those, who are wont to speak boldly and decidedly, on the most mysterious topics.

The representations, frequently made by the followers of Calvin, that the doctrines under consideration, are peculiar and essential to genuine Christianity, have obtained from many, in this state of mind, an acquiescence in dogmas, from which their better judgments would have otherwise revolted. A more deliberate examination of the history of religious opinions, might have convinced them, that these tenets have been maintained by numbers, who had *no claim* to the appellation of Christians. Though this is well known to all those, who have at all studied the subject; it may not perhaps be deemed amiss, to present one or two extracts in

proof of it, to the consideration of younger students in Theology.

Take, for example, the following reasoning of Chrysippus. "This Master of the stoics was pressed
 "with these inconvenient consequences of his decrees,
 "that then the sins of men were not to be charged on
 "their wills, but to be imputed to a necessity and
 "pressing, which arose from fate; and that it must be
 "unjust to make laws for the punishing of offenders.
 "To which he had nothing to say but this; that though
 "if you look upon the first cause, all is fatally decreed
 "and chained, yet the dispositions of each man's mind,
 "are only so *far subject* to fate as is *agreeable* to their
 "own *properties* and *qualities*: as when a man *tumbles*
 "*a cylinder* or roller down a hill, it is certain that the
 "man is the violent enforcer of the *first* revolution of
 "it, but when it is once a tumbling, the *quality* and
 "*property* of the thing itself, continues and consum-
 "mates it."⁸

This method of defending fatalism strongly resembles a mode of arguing, adopted by Zanchius, and by many other Calvinists in support of Predestination. "We" (says he) "do not hesitate therefore to confess, that
 "through this immutable reprobation, an incumbent
 "*necessity* of *sinning* rests on the reprobate, of sin-

⁸ Nichols' Arminiaism and Calvinism compared. Introdⁿ. P. iii. Note. Quoted from Dr. Hammond on Fundamentals; who remarks on this argument, that "neither is the Cy-
 "linder charged with *sin* by God or man; nor any *puni-*
 "*tive* law enacted by either, against its rolling down the
 "hill; nor are such charges or such laws ever brought in
 "or enacted against any actions of any other creature, plant,
 "or beast, till you ascend to man, who is supposed to *have*
 "a *will*, and not to be under such inevitable laws."

“ning indeed without repentance even unto death, and
 “therefore of being punished with death eternal. But
 “we deny that they are on this account *forced* to sin.
 “For it is one thing, to be *constrained* by *necessity*: and
 “it is another to be *forced*. We are forced when re-
 “luctantly and against our will, and therefore with
 “some resistance, we are compelled to do or suffer any
 “thing: but we are constrained by necessity when it is
 “*impossible* for us to do *otherwise*,—although what we
 “do is performed *willingly, spontaneously, of our own*
 “*accord*, and with delight. Thus a person who is
 “oppressed with a *violent thirst*, is constrained by the
 “necessity of drinking, and *necessarily drinks*; he
 “*cannot do otherwise than drink*,—although he does it
 “willingly and with great pleasure, and therefore, can
 “on no account be said to do it in opposition to his
 “inclination, or to be forced to drink. But when the
 “wicked commit sin, they do it knowingly, willingly,
 “and with delight; so that if you be desirous of pre-
 “venting them from committing iniquity, they are soon
 “angry with you. Therefore, you did not speak cor-
 “rectly, when you said they were forced to sin: yet in
 “the mean time it is *impossible* for them to do *otherwise*;
 “and they are constrained to it by a certain *necessity*,
 “through *God’s ordination or appointment*.”¹ Thus,
 according to this reasoning, the power of appetite in
 the thirsty man, corresponds to the force of gravity in
 the falling Cylinder, and the simile of the Stoic, is a fit
 illustration, of the metaphysicks of the Calvinist.

To pass over many other instances that might be ad-
 duced, where these doctrines have been advocated, by

¹ Nichols, ut sup. Part. I. P. 18. Note. See also the
 passages quoted above at pages 86, 87, 88.

persons either entirely ignorant of, or bitterly opposed to Gospel Truth, it may be sufficient, to notice briefly, the case of the Mahommedans.—“The sixth great point of Faith, which the Mahommedans are taught by the Koran to believe, is God’s *absolute decree* and Predestination of good and evil. For the orthodox doctrine is, that whatever hath or shall come to pass in this world, whether it be good, or whether it be bad, proceedeth entirely from the Divine will, and is irrevocably fixed and recorded from all Eternity in the preserved table ; God having secretly predetermined, not only the adverse and prosperous fortune of every person in this world, in the most minute particulars, but, also his *Faith or Infidelity* ; his *obedience* or *disobedience*, and consequently his everlasting happiness or misery after death ; which fate or predestination it is not possible to avoid.”⁶

“Disputes were long carried on, with great subtlety and much animosity among the different sects of Mahometans, concerning the decrees of God, and the freedom of the human will. Modern ingenuity has scarcely been able to invent a distinction on this obscure subject, which may not be found in the Arabian Controversialists.”⁷

“The second basis” (of Scholastick Doctrine,) regards predestination, and the justice thereof, which comprises the questions concerning God’s *purpose* and *decree*,

⁶ Sale’s Koran, Lond. 1801, Prelim. Dis. p. 137.

⁷ Enfield Hist. Philo. Dub. 1792, V. ii. p. 255. Whoever will take the trouble of looking over the 8th section of Sales preliminary discourse, will be at once convinced of this: and consequently that the doctrine of absolute decrees is, no criterion of *Gospel Faith*.

“man’s *compulsion* or *necessity* to act, and his *co-operation* in producing actions, by which he may gain “to himself good or evil, &c.”⁸

I do not mean, by the foregoing quotations, to throw any discredit on the doctrines referred to, by connecting them with the false tenets of Heathenism or Islamism. Such would be a most unfair inference. But I merely wish to show, by undeniable *facts*, that such tenets may be substantially *received* by those, who neither acknowledge, nor *love*, nor worship the REDEEMER. Surely then, the pious Calvinist, however sincerely attached to these dogmas, is not justified in regarding them, as the *special* characteristicks of Christianity. Surely, he should not thus allow himself to be misled into admitting on the one hand, the profession of such speculations, as abundant proof of a *saving* faith; and into rejecting on the other, (as is too often the case) *all* those who dissent from them, as destitute of the *knowledge* and *love* of Christ. Is there not here a manifest danger—while *non-essential* doctrines are exalted above measure,—of setting up “another Gospel;” or, at least, of allowing the mind to “be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ?”⁹ On the contrary, should not the feeling, as well as the salutation, of every Christian heart, accord with that of the Apostle: “Grace be with *all* them that *love* our *Lord Jesus Christ* in sincerity?”¹

⁸ Sales, V . i. p. 204.

⁹ II. Cor. xi. 3, ¹ Ephes. vi. 24.

APPENDIX III.

*Opposition to Absolute Predestination, and Necessity,
does not involve Opposition to the Doctrines of Grace.*

IN all that has been said concerning “Freedom of Will,” both in the text, and in the two preceding Appendix; I beg to be understood, as asserting nothing derogatory of, or inconsistent with, that glorious liberty of the children of God, that blessed Emancipation from the servitude of Sin, whereby, they are enabled, excited, and “constrained,” to choose, to love, and to practise holiness—and which is allowed by all christians, to be the essence of regeneration, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. This I conceive to be a topic, not of natural, but of revealed Religion. For *reason* never could have discovered, that God would vouchsafe such gracious “gifts unto men.” Nothing short of his own declaration, confirmed by Miracles, and corroborated by happy experience, could have furnished us with that consoling and exalting assurance, that “as many as “*received him, to them gave he power, to become the “sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, “which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the “flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”*¹

Though the consideration of this matter, does not

¹ John, i. 12, 13.

strictly belong, to the subject of the preceding discourse ; yet I beg leave to dwell a little more on it, in this place. *First*, because it is a subject, about which, I should extremely regret to countenance any erroneous opinions, or to let my own be misconceived. *Secondly*, because I apprehend, that it is also one, on which, the disputants in this controversy, generally misunderstand, and too often misrepresent each other.

I.—I should, indeed, regret to be misunderstood. For, I conceive, that, not only to reason correctly on this point, but to *feel* deeply our naturally fallen and apostate state—however humiliating it may be to human pride—is manifestly necessary to prepare the heart through Grace, for the joyful reception of those vital and fundamental Truths of the Gospel ; the Atonement of the Cross—Justification by Faith only,—and Sanctification by the Holy Spirit. On this subject I know no words, in which I can more clearly express my opinions, than those of our Articles IX and X. which, though no doubt familiar to all my readers, I quote here ; in order, to show their agreement, with some other authorities, to be cited hereafter.

ART. IX. "*Of Original or Birth Sin.*"

"Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam,
 "(as the Pelagians do vainly talk ;) but it is the fault
 "and corruption of the nature of every man, that natur-
 "ally is engendered of the offspring of Adam ; whereby
 "man is very far gone from original righteousness, and
 "is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh
 "lusteth always contrary to the spirit ; and therefore,
 "in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's
 "wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature
 "doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated, where-
 "by the lust of the flesh, called in the Greek, *phro-*

“ *nema sarkos*, which some do expound the wisdom, some
 “ sensuality, some the affection, some the desire of
 “ the flesh, is not subject to the law of God. And
 “ although there is no condemnation for them that
 “ believe and are baptized; yet the apostle doth confess,
 “ that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature
 “ of sin.”

“ ART. X. of *Free Will*.”

“ The condition of man after the fall of Adam, is
 “ such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his
 “ own *natural* strength and good works, to faith, and
 “ calling on God. Wherefore we have no power to do
 “ good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, *without*
 “ the *grace* of God by Christ preventing us, that we
 “ may have a good will, and *working with* us when we
 “ have that good will.”

I may be permitted to add, that expressions equally strong and explicit, are to be found in all the confessions of the Reformed Churches, with which I am acquainted, including those *least favorable* to the *peculiarities* of absolute Predestination. Quotations from these would show, that however the Reformers may have differed on some mysterious and metaphysical points, yet that on this they were of one consent. But I must be content with referring the reader to the documents themselves.²

II. It is too much in fashion at present, both among Predestinarians, and their opponents, to study only *one* side of this controversy. Were they to give that fair

² Corp. et. Synt. Confess. Genev. 1654. Lib. Symb. Lips. 1827. Corp. Lib. Symb. Elberf. 1827.—Syll. Confes. Oxf. 1826. See also, on this point, Extracts from these Confessions translated by Scott; in the Appendix to his answer to Tomline.

consideration to each, that a *love of truth* would suggest in every case of difficulty, but above all, in the awfully important topicks of religion; they might form not only more *accurate* conceptions of the doctrines, but more *charitable* judgments, of the *motives* and *feelings* of those from whose opinions they dissent.

Thus, with regard to the essential doctrines just quoted from our articles, the Predestinarian is too apt to deny, that his opponents either do, or can believe them. In fair reasoning, however, they have no *legitimate* connexion with the fundamental point of difference between them, viz. the doctrine of *Absolute* or *Irrespective* decrees. For, the admission of the *fallen* state of man, can in no way (that I can perceive) help to suggest or discover the method, by which Omniscience and Omnipotence, might in mercy determine, to *restore* him to holiness and favour. The divine pleasure, in this matter, must either be *conjectured* (for it could be no more than conjecture) by analogy, from God's manifest dealings with man in temporal cases of a *similar* character; or be *definitively* collected from *revelation*.

If both these lines of argument be rejected; and the mere naked admission of man's apostacy, be considered as a *sufficient* ground, from whence to argue, that some men are the subjects of Irrespective Election, and some of Irrespective Reprobation: I know not why, the still greater apostacy of the fallen spirits, might not, by a parity of reasoning, lead to the conclusion, that some of *them* also, are elected to future glory, without *any respect* to their present *unrepenting sinfulness*.

On the other hand, many Anti-predestinarians, and chiefly those inclined to Pelagianism, with a still more lamentable ignorance of *both* sides of the controversy, indiscriminately class amongst absolute Predestinarians,

all those, who sincerely and unequivocally admit, the above important truths.

The fact is, that these doctrines are not *peculiar* to the Predestinarian scheme; but have been as zealously, and as effectually supported, by some of its most strenuous *opponents*, as by any of its ablest advocates.

This mistake on the one side, and this mistatement on the other, are not only prevalent, but calculated, where prevalent, to prevent in both parties, candid inquiry, reciprocal concession, and mutual approximation to the truth. To obviate this, as far as it arises from misconception, I shall here quote the sentiments of some, whose *opposition* to the doctrine of Absolute Decrees, cannot be doubted.

And first, as to the opinions of the much persecuted, and still more misrepresented Arminius. In his declaration and defence of his opinions, before the states of Holland, he thus expresses himself, concerning *Free will*: “*In his primitive condition, as he came out of the hands of his Creator, man was endowed with such a portion of knowledge, holiness, and power, as enabled him to understand, esteem, consider, will, and to perform the true good, according to the commandment delivered to him; yet none of these acts could he do, except through the assistance of Divine Grace. But in his lapsed and sinful state, man is not capable, of and by himself, either to think, to will, or to do that which is really good; but it is necessary for him to be regenerated and renewed in his intellect, affections, or will, and in all his powers, by God in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, that he may be qualified rightly to understand, esteem, consider, will, and perform whatever is truly good. When he is made a partaker of this regeneration, or renovation, I*

“consider, that since he is delivered from sin, he is
 “capable of thinking, willing, and doing that which is
 “good, but yet *not without the continual aids of Divine*
 “*Grace.*”³ Again, speaking of Divine Grace, he says,
 “In this manner I ascribe to grace the *commencement,*
 “*the continuance, and the consummation of all good.*
 “And to such an extent do I carry its influence, that
 “a man though *already regenerate,* can neither *con-*
 “*ceive, will, nor do any good at all,* nor resist temptation,
 “without *this preventing and exciting, this following and*
 “*co-operating grace.* From this statement it will clearly
 “appear, that I am by no means injurious or unjust to
 “to grace, by attributing, as it is reported of me, too
 “much to *man’s free will*; for the whole controversy
 “reduces itself to the solution of this question; ‘Is the
 “grace of God a certain **IRRESISTIBLE** force?’ That
 “is, the controversy does not relate to those actions or
 “operations which may be ascribed to grace, (for I
 “acknowledge and inculcate as many of these actions or
 “operations as any man ever did,) but it relates solely
 “to the *mode* of operation, *whether it be irresistible* or
 “not; with respect to which, I believe, according to
 “the *scriptures,* that many persons resist the Holy
 “Spirit, and reject the grace that is offered.”⁴

I might here produce the private opinions of many other able and well known authors. But I confine myself to those of the Remonstrants, presented to the Synod of Dort. Because, they exhibit the deliberate and united testimony of several of the most learned, talented, and pious ministers, of those remarkable times. A testimony, which is the more valuable, because it was opposed, to

³ Nichols’ Trans. of Arminus’ Works, Lond, 1825. V. i. p. 595.

⁴ Ibid. p. 600.

the prevailing fashion, and prejudice of the day ; and delivered, in the face of misrepresentation, and persecution.

*“ Touching the Grace of God in the Conversion of Man.
What the Remonstrants hold.”*

TENET I.

“ They hold, that a man hath not saving faith *of himself*, nor from the power of his free will ; seeing, while he is in the state of sin, he *cannot, of himself* nor by himself, think, or will, or do, any saving good, (in which kind, faith in Christ is eminent,) but must needs, by God in Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost, be regenerated and renewed, in his mind, affections, will, and all his powers, that he may aright understand, will, and meditate, and do that which is *savingly good.*”

TENET II.

“ They hold, that the GRACE of God is the *beginning, proceeding, and fulfilling* of all good ; so as even the *regenerate* man himself, without Grace *preventing, exciting, following and co-working*, cannot *think, will, or do good*, or resist any temptation to ill : so that the *good deeds* and actions which any man can *conceive*, are to be *ascribed* to the *Grace of God in Christ.*⁵”

These few extracts are abundantly sufficient to show ; on the one side, how ignorantly and groundlessly, modern Predestinarians lay claim to the Doctrines, that maintain the *corruption of unregenerate man*, and the gift of the *free Grace of God through Christ*, as *peculiar* to their own system : and, on the other ; what unjust and undeserv-

⁵ Nichols' Armin^m. and Calv^m. compared. Part I. p. 121, 122.

ed discredit, some well-intentioned, but uninformed persons, heap on these *fundamental*, and *essential*, and *peculiar* Doctrines of the everlasting Gospel; by imputing Predestinarianism to ALL those who hold them. The fact is; that, they are, and cannot but be, both felt and acknowledged, by all experimental and scriptural christians: and especially, by those, who accede to the Articles of the established Church.

In truth, the *real* point of difference, with *reference* to *those* Doctrines, between the advocates of *irrespective* decrees, and their *Scriptural* opponents, is rightly pointed out by Arminius himself, in the preceding extract; as turning on the answer to this question—"is the *Grace* of God, a certain *irresistible* force."? This will further appear, by comparing the fourth and sixth tenets of the Remonstrants, with two Articles of the Decrees of Dort on the *same* subject: both of which I subjoin for that purpose.

TENET IV.

"They hold that effectual Grace, whereby a man is converted, is *resistible*: and though God doth so work in the will, by his word and the inward operation of the Holy Spirit, as that he gives both power to believe, and supernatural abilities, and makes a man actually to believe, yet, can man of himself, *despise that grace, not believe, and so, through his own default perish.*"

TENET VI.

"They hold, that a man by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, may do *more* good than indeed he doth, and *omit more* evil than indeed he omitteth."⁽⁶⁾

In the chapter of the Decrees of Dort, that treats of man's Conversion to God, the following is,

⁶Ibid. p. 124—126.

“ART. XII.”

“Atque hæc est illa tantopere in Scripturis prædicata
 “regeneratio, nova creatio, suscitatio e mortuis, et vivi-
 “ficatio, quam Deus, sine nobis, in nobis operatur.
 “Ea autem neutiquam fit per solam forinsecus insonan-
 “tem doctrinam, moralem suasionem, vel talem operandi
 “rationem, ut post Dei (quoad ipsum) operationem,
 “in hominis potestate maneat regenerari vel non rege-
 “nerari, converti vel non converti; sed est plane superna-
 “turalis, *potentissima* simul et *suavissima*, mirabilis,
 “arcana, et ineffabilis operatio, virtute sua, secundum
 “Scripturam (quæ ab auctore hujus operationis est
 “inspirata) nec creatione, nec mortuorum resuscitatione
 “minor, aut inferior; adeo ut omnes illi, in quorum
 “cordibus admirando hoc modo Deus operatur, *certo*,
 “*infallibiliter et efficaciter* regenerentur, et *actu* cre-
 “dant.”

Among the errors denounced in the same chapter, is the opinion of those.

VIII.

“Qui docent: ‘Deum in hominis regeneratione eas
 “suae *omnipotentiae* vires non adhibere, quibus volunta-
 “tem ejus ad fidem et conversionem *potenter et infalli-*
 “*biliter* flectat: sed positis omnibus gratiae operationibus,
 “quibus Deus ad hominem convertendum utitur, homi-
 “nem tamen Deo et Spiritui regenerationem ejus intend-
 “enti, et regenerare ipsum volenti, ita *posse resistere*,
 “et actu ipso saepe resistere, ut sui regenerationem
 “prorsus impediat, atque adeo in ipsius manere potestate,
 “ut regeneretur, vel non regeneretur.’ “Hoc enim
 “nihil aliud est, quam tollere *omnem* efficaciam gratiae
 “Dei in nostri conversione, et actionem Dei omnipoten-
 “tis subjicere voluntati hominis, &c. &c.” (7)

⁷ Corp. Lib. Symb. J. C. G. Augusti. Elberfeldi, 1827, p. 222, 228.

Thus the *practical*, and therefore the truly *important* point at issue, between the parties in this controversy is the doctrine of "*Irresistible Grace*."

Without pretending to enter into this question at large, I may be permitted to observe; that the affirmative seems to me, to be exposed to similar objections in Spirituals, that the Doctrine of Necessity is in Natural things.^a

For first: it is admitted by both sides, that without Grace, no *sincere* obedience to God, can be rendered by man. In the next place: Grace, if *irresistible*, can neither be *used* nor *abused*; but must *of itself*, and in *all* cases, produce a holiness of conduct and affections, exactly commensurable to the degree in which it is bestowed. From these two positions, it seems evident, that no man can be considered properly accountable, for his conduct in Spiritual matters. For, as long as, and critically to that extent, in which he is thus irresistibly *led* by Divine Grace, he does, and *must* obey: and whenever, and exactly in that degree, in which it is *withdrawn*, he *cannot but* relapse. So that his conduct, whether as to obedience or omissions—nay, even his changes in temper, inclinations, and purposes—must exactly correspond to the varying degrees of Grace *irresistibly* operating upon him; and—contrary to all analogy—not at all to the use, he may, or ought to make of them. In short, the scheme of spirituals, may, according to this hypothesis, be *strictly* stated, in the *same terms* as that of Necessity. And, it may be asserted, with reference to Holiness or Unholiness, that it is *impossible* for any man, to think, feel, desire, or act, *otherwise*, than he *has done*, *does*, or *shall do*.

^aVid. Sup. Notes, p. 10, 133, 163.

Against this statement, I confidently make the same appeal, as against the Hypothesis of Necessity in natural things. I appeal from speculation to facts—from the subtilties of the Metaphysician, to the experience of the Christian—from the reveries of abstraction, to those things that we *know best*, and feel most sensibly. *How* the nature of the regenerated man *is* constituted in this respect, is a question of *fact*, not of fancy. And, (excluding Scriptural declarations, which I am not here considering,) it is such a question of fact, as can only be determined by the testimony of consciousness in any individual case; and, of course, in general, by the fullest induction from such cases; or, in other words, by the suffrages of the majority of Christians.

I speak not here of mere professors, of what denomination soever they be: nor of those, who, “having a form of Godliness but denying the power thereof,”⁹ “hold the truth in unrighteousness.”¹ With regard to neither of these, do we possess any *evidence*, that *they* have any real experience, in the *facts* of the question to be decided. They may, or they may not, have *once* been subjects of Grace. But of this we have no proof. To give, therefore, any weight to *their* testimony in this case, would be to violate all the established rules of Philosophical induction. It is to the evidence of those, whose *consistent* lives—whose holy tempers—whose spiritualized affections,—*prove* them to be truly children of adoption and Grace; and discover in them—by its *fruits*—“the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind, to high and heavenly things”²—it is to them

⁹ II Tim. iii. 5.¹ Rom. I. 18.² Article xviii.

we should apply for information on *this* subject.

And what is the testimony of consciousness with them? Where is the child of God, who, in his prostrations before the throne of mercy—in his repentance for transgression—in his confession of backslidings—in his supplications for pardon,—would venture to breathe the suggestion; that in his pursuit and practice of Godliness, he had really done *all* that was in *his power* to do: that he had lost no opportunities—neglected no warnings—abused no privileges—disregarded no suggestions of conscience—*resisted* no strivings of grace—done nothing to “*grieve*,” or to “*quench* the Holy Spirit,”²—in short, that, in these matters, he had actually done the *utmost* that God had *enabled* him to do—had left *nothing* undone, except through the *want of Grace* and ability to do it? What truly humble Christian would thus virtually assert (with Priestly) that in all his *sins* and *omissions*, he had done nothing but what God had “intended to be, and had made provision for;”³ that in all things, he had been truly a “worker together “with God.”⁴ I do honestly believe, that there is scarcely to be found a truly humble pious Christian,—one whose testimony is of any value in this question,—who would hazard such assertions. And yet, these assertions are nothing more, as has been shown, than the simple statement, of the doctrine of “*Irresistible Grace*,” as *applied to practice*.

I know, that it is the usual system of the advocates of “*Irresistible Grace*,” to *alarm* the humble and serious inquirer, into an acquiescence in their views, by adducing *abstract* arguments to show, that their *opponents*

² Ephes. iv. 30.—1 Thess. v. 19.

³ Vid. Sup. P. 135. Note. ⁴ 2 Cor. vii. 2.

cannot ascribe to God the whole glory of their salvation : and by attributing to them, in no very measured terms, the assumption of self-righteousness, and the arrogance of boasting.

I shall not here stop to notice particularly, the arguments by which these imputations are usually supported. They consist, as far as I am acquainted with them, in speculative subtilties, or metaphysical deductions from insulated texts of Scripture ; and I should consider it an unprofitable employment of time, to set about unravelling their sophistry. I think it quite sufficient to know, that they pretend (most unphilosophically) to decide on matters of *fact*, by scholastick abstractions. To the same experience, then, as before, and to the same tests of that experience, do I appeal in reply to them also. For it may, I think, be truly averred ; that the same consciousness, the same penitence, the same confessions, the same supplications, that testify against the existence of ‘ *irresistible* grace ; do, with a voice equally clear and explicit, testify against every claim to self-righteousness, against every pretence for boasting. They disclose to us, not by vain speculations, but by legitimate induction from the testimony of consciousness, what is the truth in point of *fact*. They announce to us, as the universal decision of Christian *experience* ; that *without* divine grace, we are “ wretched, and miserable, and poor, “ and blind, and naked ; ”⁵ and that even when regenerated and adopted, we are (in ourselves and in our works) but unworthy and “ unprofitable servants.”⁶

And here, I may be permitted to remark, how much more conducive to the purposes of *practical* piety, is

⁵ Rev. iii. 17.

⁶ Luke xviii. 10.

this method, of *commencing* our investigation with the things *best known* to us—the spiritual phenomena we *experience*—than that, of trusting so important a decision, to mere verbal distinctions, and to the uncertainty of Metaphysical reveries. He, whose estimate of himself—of his spiritual state, and his spiritual wants—depends on such *Theoretical* conclusions, may continually change his views, as he is more or less entangled, by their endless and perplexing subtilties—but he, who *judges* himself, from the humiliating testimony, of a *conscience enlightened by revelation*, cannot go far astray. Hence it is, that *pious* Christians, how various soever their *abstract* views, do practically adopt the *same* language, when the pride and folly of human wisdom, are prostrated in prayer, before the throne of Grace.

On the whole, I see no just grounds for reproaching, as deniers of the necessity, the freedom, and the sufficiency of Grace; those, who *only deny* that (generally speaking) it is *irresistible*. On the contrary, I think it has been shown, that all the sentiments of genuine remorse, all the feelings of true contrition, (sentiments and feelings which are *themselves* the *gifts* of grace) testify against it. For, they teach us, that we are *worthy* of *censure* and *punishment*, (even *after* regeneration), for doing those things, which *through* Grace, we *might* have avoided; and for omitting those things, which, through the same Grace, we *might* have performed. Whereas, were Divine Grace *irresistible*, it would be utterly *impossible* (as has been already shown,) that any regenerated Christian should, in *spiritual* matters, think, desire, will, or *act otherwise* than *he has done, does, or shall do*. To all attempts therefore to establish such positions, by mere *abstract* arguments, I feel quite content in opposing that instinctive rejection, with which, the spiritual con-

sciousness, of unbiassed and practical Christians, generally meets them. When, therefore, such casuistry is used, to prove to me, that in spiritual matters, I am *not* (through Grace) a *free* Agent; the true reply is “I *feel* that I am.” When such fancied demonstrations are adduced to show, that I cannot act *otherwise* than I do; the legitimate, the philosophical refutation is, “I am *conscious* that I can.” It is, in short, the answer in *this case*, (as well as in natural things) of *experience* to speculation—of *fact* to hypothesis.”⁷

⁷ Vid. Sub. P. 162, 163. On the subject of this Appendix, I beg also to refer to Dean Graves’s work on Calvinism, Pref. Address, P. ix. to xvi.—Introd, P. 51,—and Discourse xv.

SERMON II.

I Cor. x. 11.

“ Now all these things happened unto to them for examples : and they are written for our admonition, upon whom, the ends of the world are come.”

WERE it permitted us to conjecture beforehand, what would form the prominent character of a Revelation, intended, not merely to gratify speculative curiosity, but to regulate the actions of Men ; we might, I think, without presumption, assume the probability of the following positions.

That it would *not* contain, any metaphysical attempts, to explain the Essence of the Divine Nature, or the operations of the Divine Mind. For, as has been remarked in a former discourse, it would probably be impossible for our finite intellects, to form, with respect to the

great Invisible, Infinite, and Eternal, any adequate conceptions of these—adequate, I mean, to the truth and reality of the case.

That it *would* contain, such representations of the Deity, and communicated in such a way, as would suit our *limited capacities*, and meet our *actual wants*.

I.—In *order to suit our capacities*, we must suppose, that such representations would be made, by references to what we experience, and can understand in ourselves, or in the Creation around us ; and which we may imagine to be, as it were, “ the shadows, and faint communications of those attributes, which exist in “ God, in complete and adorable perfection.”

II.—In *order to meet our wants*, that is, to guide our conduct: we should expect—*First*; that such representations, or rather the injunctions connected with them, should have a reference to human actions ; and therefore, that such actions must already have had an existence. Hence, we might suppose, that Revelation would be communicated only by *degrees*, as man advanced from one stage to another.¹

¹ Hence perhaps, we may, in some measure, account for the extreme simplicity, both, of the trial imposed on our first parents previous to the fall, and of the immediately subsequent promise of the Messiah. We see also, that for

Secondly; as the divine commands made known to us in these successive communications, if merely stated in the abstract, would be found (as we see in human laws) exceedingly doubtful in their application, till example had defined and determined their true import; so we might naturally anticipate, that Providence would graciously vouchsafe to point out to us, their bearing and connexion with *real* life, in a sufficient number of instances, to fix our ideas, and to regulate our actions. In other words we might expect, that He would explain to us, the principles of his *actual dealings* with men, whether individually or nationally, in some such cases, as might furnish us, with a sure standard of his will, and certain criteria of our future hopes and prospects. But, that these instances might be sufficiently intelligible to us, it is evident, that they must have been presented to us, in *all* their *extent*: that is, they must have been brought to some kind of a *close*, in this life. Or, in other words, the rewards and punishments, in such cases, must have been so far temporal, as (though not excluding subsequent ones hereafter) sufficiently to develop the Divine intentions, in all similar instances;

them, many of the Mosaic regulations (for example those regarding marriage) would, for many years, have been impracticable.

and thus to enable us to assume ; that when such sanctions were not exhibited in time, we should look for them in eternity.² It is also clear, that when a sufficient number of such cases were exhibited ; man might, thenceforth, be left to make use of the knowledge, already communicated. That is, the *visible* interferences of Providence would be no longer necessary ; and written accounts, of those that had taken place, might be deemed sufficient for succeeding generations.

² Hence we may see the reasonableness of arguing from God's *revealed temporal* dealings, both to his *spiritual* dealings here ; and to his eternal awards hereafter. For, it was only thus, that his *unseen* and *future* government could have been pictured out, by what was actually present and visible. So argues the Apostle (Heb. xii. 15.) in the case of Esau. His was, in the first instance, (though, no doubt, the promise of the Messiah was also involved,) a *temporal* privilege, forfeited for a *temporal* indulgence ; yet, it is assumed, as a *pattern* of God's *spiritual* dealings with his people. "Looking diligently lest any man *fail* of
" the *Grace* of God ; lest any root of bitterness springing
" up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled ; lest there
" be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for
" one morsel of meat, sold his birth-right,—for ye know
" how that afterwards when he would have inherited the
" blessing he was rejected, for he found no place for repent-
" ance, though he sought it carefully with tears." So, also, are Sampson, Saul, David, Solomon, and many others, set forth for our example, being *temporal* and *visible* types, of God's *spiritual* dealings with us here, and of his *final* judgments of us in another world.

Now, such a collection of facts and precepts, though totally inadequate to convey to us, accurate notions of the *intrinsic nature* of the incomprehensible Deity ; would be quite sufficient for all the most *important* purposes of Religion ; whose chief design is, to inform man, (in such a manner as to *influence* his life,) of God's intentions towards him, and of his methods of dealing with him.

These historical relations, combined with such other facts, as Providence might see fit to disclose, (such as the Creation, the Fall and Agency of the Apostate Spirits, &c. &c.) might, I think, be not improperly designated the *Moral Phenomena* of REVELATION : and, in the *Philosophy* of REVEALED RELIGION, (if I may be allowed to use the expression,) might be supposed to occupy a corresponding place, to that already assigned, in Natural Religion, to the *Moral Phenomena* of ordinary observation. Hence there would be a striking analogy, in the legitimate manner, of arriving at right conclusions in both. And, we should see, *facts*, and *deductions from facts*, in *this*, as well as in other subjects of philosophical investigation, superceding the use, of metaphysical subtilties, and of scholastick conceits. A method, which would enable the sober inquirer, to make some *certain* progress in religious knowledge : but

which would also teach him, to stop with humility and submission, when arrived at the *practical* boundaries, assigned by supreme wisdom to the excursions of our *finite* intellects.

If I mistake not, it will be found, that these conjectures, and this analogy, are not inconsistent, with the character of that revelation, *actually* in our possession.

In a former discourse, I endeavoured to show, that we had scripture authority for concluding, that a careful examination of the Moral Phenomena of *Nature*, should form the *first* step, in our inquiries into *Natural* Religion. The text I have chosen on the present occasion, teaches us, that a similar course (to a certain extent at least) should be pursued with revealed religion; or in other words, that an attentive study of the *Moral Phenomena* of REVELATION, should form an important part of our inquiries, into the *revealed* character of our Supreme Governour. I shall now from Revelation itself, briefly illustrate this position; and then deduce some practical conclusions, more particularly connected with the subject of these discourses.

On examining the sacred volume, we cannot but be struck with one remarkable characteristic, which distinguishes it from all the systems

of Religion, that *uninspired* writers have offered to the notice of mankind. It does *not*, like them, contain abstruse and involved discussions concerning the nature and essence of the Deity. Discussions, which are so manifestly inapplicable to the affairs of common life, as to be generally deemed, even by their patrons themselves, as unfit to be presented to the lower orders: who are, nevertheless, as much interested as those above them in true Religion. But, it *does* present to us a detail of the *actual dealings* of God with noted individuals, or with remarkable portions of the human race. Transactions, which—taken in connexion with the various commands, warnings, threats and promises, of which, they are at once the evidence and fulfilment—exhibit, not in theory but by *facts*, the real character of God's moral government.

In his state of innocence, though man was probably as much superior to us, in intellectual as in moral powers; his instruction, as *far* as we can learn, was carried on, not theoretically, but practically. When the Almighty would declare to him his *power* and *wisdom*, he showed him the varied *works* of Creation, and brought unto him “every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air,” that he might discern their excellence, and give them names.

When he would make him acquainted with his overflowing bounty ; “ he planted a Garden “ in Eden, and there he put the man whom “ he had formed, and out of the ground he “ made to grow, every tree that is pleasant “ to the sight, and good for food ;” and he gave him “ dominion over the fish of the sea, “ and over the fowl of the air, and over the cat- “ tle, and over all the earth.”—To teach him dependance on the Almighty for present and future existence, he planted the sacramental tree of life in the midst of the garden ; with permission, as long as he should remain obedient, to “ eat thereof and live for ever.” Here, also, he placed “ the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” with the prohibition to touch it’s fatal fruit : in order to warn him against the *presumptuous* desire to *walk alone*, in the unaided strength of his own intellectual attainments.

On the fall, likewise, how fearfully, and yet, how practically, did a God of holiness demonstrate, that he was “ of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ;” when he withdrew the light of his countenance from that creation, which before he had rejoiced in as “ very good,” and pronounced that awful sentence, which fell like a withering blight on the face of nature, and dried up all the springs of life.

Subsequently to the fall, when the human mind was to be prepared, for the Gospel scheme of redemption; this was not done by any elaborate description of his mysterious attributes, or of the necessity of devising some system, for reconciling their conflicting demands; but by the simple institution of sacrifices: in which, the penitent, while bending over the yet quivering frame of his innocent victim, learned to mingle the tears of contrition, with the blood of atonement; and to send up the aspirations of Faith and Hope, with the accepted incense of his burnt offering.

Passing over many other remarkable events, such as the translation of Enoch after his having “walked with God three hundred years.”³—Noah’s “preaching of righteousness”⁴ in building the ark, “by the which he condemned the world”⁵—the awful proof exhibited in a general deluge, that “though hand join with hand “the guilty shall not go unpunished”⁶—“the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah,” which “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire,” was made “an example unto those that after should “live ungodly :”⁷—let us confine our attention to that period, when man having again “cor-

³ Gen. v. 22, 24.—Heb. xi. 5.—Jude 14.

⁴ II Pet. ii. 5.

⁵ Heb. xi. 7.

⁶ Prov. xi. 21.

⁷ Jude 7.—II Pet. ii. 6.

“rupted his ways,” the Almighty determined to institute a more effectual means, of manifesting himself, his character, and his moral government, to mankind. What then was the method adopted for that purpose? was it the promulgation of any system of dogmatic theology? No—it was a plan totally different—consisting in a gradually developed series, of striking and instructive facts, by which, not only those personally concerned therein might be taught, but from the exhibition of which, *all* serious and attentive observers, might judge for themselves, of the dealings of providence. And for this purpose, there was displayed, from time to time, a degree of miraculous interference, sufficient, both to attract general attention, and to direct it upwards to that divine superintendence, which regulated this train of remarkable events.

Thus was Abraham called away from his country, and his kindred, and his father’s house, and ⁸ in all his wanderings—through fierce and strange lands—so providentially blessed with peace and prosperity, as to be in fact a practical preacher of righteousness; for wherever he sojourned, “he built an altar and called on the name of the Lord.” ⁹

Subsequently to this; the elevation of Jo-

⁸ Gen. xii.

⁹ Gen. xii. 7, 8.—xiii. 4,

seph in the sight of Pharoah, and of all Egypt—the public announcement by Moses and Aaron, of the true character and government of God, attested by the fearful Plagues inflicted on the extensive dominions of a great and civilized nation, and terminating with the awful destruction of an entire army—could not but make known to the Egyptians, and to all the nations with whom they had intercourse, the name of the most high God who fore-warned them by his servant, “I will be honoured on Pharaoh and “upon all his host, that the Egyptians may “know that I am the Lord.”

Again, when he brought forth these his servants with a high hand and out-stretched arm—a vast host “of men women and children,”—leading them by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night—supporting them in a barren wilderness, with water from the rock, and food from Heaven, so that their raiment waxed not old, neither did their foot swell for forty years—when Jordan stayed his waters at their presence, and Jericho bowed her ramparts at the shout of their approach—when the “Canaanite and the Jebusite, and the “Hivite, and the Hittite, nations stronger and “mightier than they,” with their horses, and chariots, and giant warriors, and “walled towns “and fenced cities,” “were rooted up and cast

“ out ” before them, like misty phantoms by the sweeping whirlwind—were not the eyes of all the surrounding nations turned towards “ this “ people terrible from the beginning,” and were they not all thus forced to consider the character and moral government of the God of the Israelites—and, when they reflected on the spirituality of their worship, the purity of their moral code, and the sublimity of their prospects; might they not well understand, and assent to that exclamation of the inspired writer, “ what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call on him for, and what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law” ?

In a similar manner, every successive dispensation to the Israelites, was calculated, not only to improve them, but also, to afford to surrounding nations, practical instruction, as to the moral government of the only true God.

Under their Judges, their prosperity and peace, while obedient ; their wars and afflictions while back-sliding—under their Kings, the conquests of David: the power and prosperity of Solomon; whose ships brought in the gold of Ophir, and the spices of utmost Arabia ; who in his extensive knowledge “ spake of trees from the Cedar “ that is in Lebannon, even to the Hyssop

“ that springeth out of the wall,” so that “ there came all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon from all the Kings of the Earth”—all contributed to extend, by *Facts*, the knowledge of Jehova, and of his moral government through the surrounding countries.

The same truths were still more widely circulated, by the dispersion of the ten tribes—by the captivity and sojourn of Judah at Babylon—and by all the remarkable interpositions of God, on their account, during that period—as the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar; the fidelity of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; the prophecies of Daniel; the decrees of Cyrus; the rebuilding of Jerusalem; and the return of it's afflicted and penitent exiles.

From this time forward, the inquiring regards of all civilized nations must have been fixed on this extraordinary and favoured people; while their peculiar customs distinguished them and their doctrines, wherever they settled, and kept them still in communication with Jerusalem, the centre of all their hopes and expectations; so that at the feast of Pentecost, there came up to the holy city “ devout men of every nation under Heaven”—“ Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia,

“ in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphilia,
“ in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about
“ Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and
“ Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians.”¹ Thus,
were opportunities afforded to every civilized
nation, of becoming practically acquainted
with the ways of Providence, as exhibited in
the striking, diversified, and miraculous history,
of this singular people.

I cannot but here remark, that it was to
these practical developements of the Divine
Attributes; and not to Metaphysical Theories,
that the Saints of the Old Testament appealed,
when they sought, in times of trial, for consolation,
and for strength—for grounds of hope,
and for motives of obedience. On such heart-
searching occasions—when the soul panteth af-
“ ter God, as the hart panteth after the water
brooks”² when metaphysical illusions, like un-
substantial and shadowy forms, mock the grasp,
and fade from the sight—on such occasions, *they*
turned, to the heart reviving, and spirit stirring
recollections, of the Wisdom, and the Mercies,
and the Faithfulness of God, as displayed in
their *past* history. “ O give thanks unto the
“ Lord,” says the Psalmist, “ call upon his name,
“ remember his marvellous works that he hath
“ done, his wonders and the judgments of his

¹ Acts ii. 5, 9, 10, 11.

² Ps. xiii. 1.

“mouth; O ye seed of Abraham his servant,
 “ye children of Jacob his chosen,” “he hath
 “remembered his covenant for ever,” which he
 “made with Abraham and his oath unto Isaac,
 “when they were but a few men in number;
 “when they went from one nation to another,
 “from one kingdom to another people,—he
 “suffered no man to touch them; yea, he
 “reproved kings for their sakes; saying, touch
 “not mine anointed, and do my prophets no
 “harm”³—so, likewise the prophet—“I will
 “mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord and
 “the praises of the Lord, according to all that
 “the Lord has bestowed on us, and the great
 “goodness towards the house of Israel, which
 “he hath bestowed on them according to his
 “mercies, and according to the multitude of
 “his loving kindnesses.”⁴

Finally: when the result, for which all these events were only a preparation, was to be achieved; when it was determined “to finish
 “the transgression, and to make an end of sins,
 “and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and

³ Ps. cv. 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15.

⁴ Isai. lxiii. 7. This may also account, for the frequent appeals to the character of God, as displayed in their past history, which the Apostles generally adopted, when preached for the first time to a Jewish audience.

“ to bring in everlasting righteousness ; ” ⁵ was this highest revelation of the Divine Attributes effected, by the promulgation of any system of abstruse dogmas, or Metaphysical theories? Far otherwise—that Word, which “ in the “ beginning was with God, and was God ”—that Word condescended to be “ made flesh “ and dwelt among us,” ⁶ and being “ the brightness of his (*Father's*) Glory, and the express “ Image of his person ; ” ⁷ he exhibited in his own *life* and *character*, the most glorious manifestation of the Divine Attributes—boundless power and wisdom—unchanging gentleness, goodness, and truth—all the long suffering of pardoning mercy, and all the tenderness of redeeming love—and “ we beheld “ his glory, the glory as of the only begotten “ of the Father, full of grace and truth.” ⁸

Nor was his ministry confined, like that of ordinary Moralists, to mere verbal declamation; but presented to the eyes of the human race, a long series of *instructive actions*, intelligible to every understanding, and coming home to the feelings of every penitent heart. Thus—the same Divine Personage, who achieved the redemption of Man, has also vindicated the attributes of Deity ; and Providence in this, as

⁵ Dan. ix. 24. ⁶ John i. 1, 14. ⁷ Heb. i. 3. ⁸ John i. 14.

in other instances, has made the accomplishment of his gracious designs, their best practical explanation. “Without controversy, “great is the mystery of godliness: God was “manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, “seen of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles, “believed on in the world, received up into “glory.”⁹

Thus, it has, I trust, been made to appear, in this and the preceding discourse; that, it has been the scheme of Providence, both in Natural and Revealed Religion, to disclose to us, whatever he designed we should know of his character, not by abstract theories, but by practical exhibitions of himself, as recorded by the wonders he has wrought, whether in the kingdom of Nature, or in that of Grace.

We have, then, a great stream of *events*; whether set forth in sacred history, or in inspired prophecy—reaching from the Creation, till the “restitution of all things;”¹ “—which are written for our admonition, on “whom the ends of the world are come;” and to which we should “do well to take heed, “as to a light that shineth in a dark place,”² if we wish to examine with impartiality, the character and laws of God’s moral government.

⁹ Tim. iii. 16.

¹ Acts iii. 21.

² 2 Pet. i. 19.

Here, it may perhaps be asked, of what superior value, in this point of view, are *Revealed* facts; when we have abundant examples, of the dealings of Providence, in the narratives of *ordinary* history.

Putting out of consideration, (as not bearing on this question,) their importance, as component, and perhaps necessary parts, of the scheme of redemption: it may be replied; that, even supposing the details of sacred and profane narrative, to possess the same character and importance; yet, they could not be considered, as equally useful, in leading to *practical* results. In arguing from the *ordinary* transactions of the human race, we should, in order to obtain any general rules freed from the influence of anomalies and errors, proceed by a long and laborious induction, rendered the more difficult, not only by the number and variety of the parts, but by the want of *authentick* information concerning them. Whereas, the history of any one individual, or of any one nation, *certified* to us on Divine authority, as directed and controlled by Divine superintendance, becomes immediately, a generic type, of God's dealings in all *similar* instances.

By these, as by a *certain* standard, we can judge of his intentions towards us, much better

than by any abstract maxims, or definitions, *without* such assistance. In a like-manner, it is, that even illiterate men—incapable of attaining legal knowledge, or general views—soon become *experimentally* acquainted, with the character of their Sovereign, and the nature of his government, by observing the measures adopted around them. And so likewise, the child—long before he can reason correctly on abstract principles—can estimate the character of his parent, and what he may expect from him, by the general tenour of his conduct, and the treatment he has already experienced.

There is, however, this great difference—that with our Sovereign Ruler, there “is no variable-
“ness nor shadow of turning;”³ “he is not a
“man, that he should lie, nor the son of man,
“that he should repent,”⁴ but being “the same
“yesterday to day, and for ever;”⁵ we need not dread in him the changes of human caprice, or the fluctuations of human passion; but may depend on his *revealed dealings* with the sons of men, as sure marks of his *permanent* dispensations. Apply these considerations to that one *fact*—upon which indeed hinges all Scripture history—that “God so loved the world,
“that he gave his only begotten Son, that
“whosoever believeth on him, should not perish,

³ Ja^s. i. 17. ⁴ Num. xxiii. 19. ⁵ Heb. xiii. 8.

“but have everlasting life;”⁶—reflect on it, as a *practical* exhibition, of his unaltered and unalterable nature, and we have a more heart-convincing proof of his boundless pity, and everlasting love, than all the range of Metaphysical disquisition could supply.

In closing this part of my subject, it is important to remark; that the force of the position, which it has been the object of the preceding observations to establish, lies in this; that not merely has God been pleased, to give us this inspired account of his *dealings* with portions of the human race, but that he has done this, to the exclusion of every thing like abstract or metaphysical discussion.

He has, at different times and places, ordained rites and ceremonies, and issued various commandments and threats, warnings and promises; and finally, he who “at sundry “times, and in divers manners, spake in times “past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath “in these last days spoken unto us by his “Son;”⁷ and strange indeed must it seem, that in the lengthened lapse of so many ages, and amidst the multiplied variety of so many events—combining to form a mighty apparatus, involving the destinies of the whole human race, and carried on by Prophets and

⁶ John iii. 16. ⁷ Heb. i. 1, 2.

Evangelists, by Saints and Angels, by the Holy Spirit, and by the everlasting Son—he should never have furnished us, with any arranged or scientific system of Metaphysical Theology; if it had pleased him, that such should form our only, or our *chief* means of instruction.

Surely, then, we should be content to judge of his character and his government, in the way he himself has revealed it; and abstain from abstract speculations on subjects not disclosed to us. Lest in attempting to be wise above what is written, and so intruding “into the secret things that belong to the “Lord,”⁸ we, like our first Parents, be found guilty of seeking after *forbidden* knowledge; and, like them, be excluded from the blessings set before us—the inexhaustable and immortalizing fruits, which crown that tree of life, whose leaves shall be “for the healing of the “nations.”⁹

It may, perhaps, be objected to the views here advanced; that they exclude the consideration of the doctrinal parts of scripture, especially of the Epistles. In reply: I desire it should be distinctly remembered; that what is meant, is only, that the *Moral Phenomena*

⁸ Deut. xxix. 29.

⁹ Rev. xxii. 2.

of Revelation, and not Metaphysical speculations, should form the principal *foundation* of our deductions, concerning the attributes and government of the Deity. But this does not exclude us, from reasoning about them ourselves, much less from adopting the *conclusions, derived from them* by the inspired writers. Indeed, I think it may be safely asserted, that what are generally called the Doctrinal parts of Scripture, and particularly those of the Apostolick Epistles, consist chiefly in explanations of, and deductions from *Revealed Facts*; and especially from the life, sufferings, and intercession of the Redeemer. Perhaps, much of the difficulty, which *seems* to attach to these doctrinal passages, arises out of the tendency to *forget* this important connexion, and to view them as mere *abstract* statements, or insulated propositions. Whereas, when considered in their proper relation to the *rest* of the sacred writings, they may be regarded, as inspired commentaries thereon: and so far from disagreeing with the views already stated, they, in fact, complete the *ulterior* steps of the religious inquiry proposed: and thus furnish us, with a beautiful whole; in which, nothing is deficient, that could be “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and in instruction in righteousness.”¹

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

To follow the line of reasoning, thus laid down—and, from the great body of revealed facts, considered as illustrations of the more abstract statements of Scripture, to deduce correct notions of the divine character, and moral government, would be the legitimate method, of arriving at conclusions, consistent with the *Philosophy of Revelation*.² This, evidently, does not come, within the scope, of the present discourse; which was intended, rather, to establish the general principle, than to follow out the details.

² This is the plan (though not presented exactly in the above point of view) pursued in Dean Graves's "Calvinistic Predestination, repugnant to the *general tenour* of Scripture." The same plan, may, in general, be considered, as adopted by all those, who, faithfully adhering to Scripture *Facts*, in preference to abstruse speculations, have endeavoured to collect the "Will of God," from the simple records, He has himself vouchsafed.—A plan which, though it pretends not to unfold to it's followers, the operations of the divine mind, can yet, under the divine blessing, unite them in holy and blessed "fellowship, with "the Father and his Son Jesus Christ," through the knowledge of him, who "was manifested to us" as "eternal life." In truth, it is evident, from the line of reasoning proposed, that the conclusions resulting from the application of sound Philosophy to Revelation, must correspond with the ordinary impressions produced on the humble and candid inquirer, by the *general tenour* of scripture testimony.—Therefore, I assert, that no inference, however plausible, deduced from *single texts*, ought to be admitted, even by the most ordinary

I may, however, be permitted to make the following remarks on what has been said.

First — That no passages of Holy Writ — however abstract they may appear when announced in a separate form — can, consistently with the Philosophy of Revelation, be interpreted *separately* from the facts, with which, they are historically connected.

Secondly — That much less, can such *insulated* texts be admitted, as the foundation of any theory, *opposed* to the *general character*, of revealed events.

Thirdly — That in arguing “seriatim” from these events, to determine the nature of God’s moral government, we have no right to adopt any theory, which is not plainly deducible

mind, in opposition to the *practical convictions*, that common sense can, and will, with the assistance of Divine Grace, deduce, from a familiar and extended acquaintance, with the sacred records. — “It is incredible” says Bishop Horsely, “to any one who has not made the experiment, what a proficiency may be made in that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation, by studying the Scripture in this manner, without any other commentary or exposition, than what the different parts of the sacred volume mutually furnish for each other. — Let the most illiterate christian study them in this manner, and let him never cease to pray for the illumination of that Spirit, by which those books were dictated, and the whole compass of abstruse Philosophy, and recondite History, shall furnish no argument, with which the perverse will of man, shall be able to shake this *learned Christian’s Faith*.”

from the facts themselves, or which is not *directly asserted* of them, in some part of the inspired writings.

Fourthly—That when the conclusions deducible from *different* facts, *seem* to contradict each other; we should, as *fundamental* propositions, prefer those, that are supported by the greater number, to those only derivable from the minority—those borne out by plain and intelligible facts, to those that rest on obscure or mysterious ones—and those, that accord to the analogies of God's ordinary dealings with mankind, to those that violate such analogies.

Fifthly—That the *general* conclusions thus obtained, are not to be abandoned in deference to apparently opposing facts; but are only to be so far modified, as to afford, with regard to these also, a consistent explanation.

Lastly—In reviewing these Scripture histories, *two* things are to be considered: the treatment adopted, towards the persons *immediately concerned* in those events; and the *entire* account of that treatment, handed down to us—comprehending therein, the observations of the inspired writers. The former of these exhibits the moral phenomena designed for the immediate instruction of the cotemporaneous generations—whether actors, or spectators; the latter combines these, with their moral inferences; and under the sanction of

divine authority, promulgates the whole “for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come.” Of course it might naturally be expected, that the former should vary considerably, according to the different ages of the world—the different states and circumstances of the human race: but, that the latter should exhibit the Deity, as pursuing the same end, though by the adoption of different means—inculcating the same great truths, though by different ways—and displaying, though under varied aspects, and accommodated to the diverse circumstances, the same Eternal and Glorious Attributes—the same Essential and Immutable principles, of Moral Government. Hence it follows, that the two should be so interpreted as to unite and harmonize together.

The foregoing rules are so obvious, and reasonable, that it seems unnecessary to explain, or enforce them. I shall therefore confine myself, to noticing a few instances of reasoning on cases of Scripture history, wherein these rules have been manifestly violated, by the advocates of absolute Predestination.

The Supralapsarian, arguing on abstract principles, asserts, that the fall of man from his first state of innocency, was predetermined, by an eternal and infallible decree. I think it

unnecessary to examine the *abstract* arguments, by which, this theory is supported. I perceive, that it evidently violates the third of the preceding rules ; and it seems to me an abundant answer, to refer to the revealed history of the fact, which in no wise intimates the existence of any such decree : but, on the contrary, exhibits the conduct of our first parents, and the proceedings of their judge, in exactly that light, in which they *must have been represented*, if the *contrary* supposition were *true*. For it describes *them*, as overpowered by that self-condemnation and remorse, which proves their consciousness, of having done that, which they *might* and ought to have avoided ; and it describes their judge, as inflicting punishments, *corresponding* to their *respective degrees* of guilt : which would have been evidently absurd, on the supposition, that *both* were borne down by a *similar* and *irresistible necessity*.

Similar statements, and, as it seems to me, equally unauthorized by Scripture *facts*, have been hazarded with regard to Pharaoh. It has been asserted, that his hardness of heart, and his subsequent destruction, were the necessary consequences, of a predetermined and irrespective decree.

To avoid all *verbal* criticisms, let us admit

the passages adduced in support of this statement: and they would prove nothing more, than that Pharaoh's heart *was* hardened by God: but it would still remain to be decided, whether this was done *decretally*, and *irrespectively* of his conduct, as asserted by Predestinarians; or *judicially*, as supposed by their opponents.

To determine this question, I would—to any candid and unprejudiced person—say; look at the *facts* of the case; and judge of the dealings of God towards his creature, as reasonably, as you would of those of any sovereign towards his subjects; not by metaphysical, and overstrained deductions, from detached expressions; but by the *whole tenour*, of his *actual* proceedings.

First—Observe how frequently, and how unequivocally, the Almighty warned Pharaoh, of the fate that should attend his perseverance in transgressions—what reiterated signs and wonders were vouchsafed, in proof of these warnings—how, at times, these awful judgments (so far from hardening Pharaoh) did actually force him to relent, and to confess, “I have sinned this time, the Lord is righteous, and I, and my people are wicked”⁷—and how invariably this, his humiliation, was followed by a

⁷ Exod. ix. 27.

further reprieve, and a *conditional* removal of his punishments—and then, on a fair and impartial view of all these *facts*, say, whether such was not exactly the course of proceeding, that should have been adopted towards Pharaoh on the *supposition*---that *no* irrespective decree existed, but that each successive hardening was, at most, only the *judicial* consequence of the preceding transgression.

Secondly—Let the observations offered in the last of the preceding rules, be here applied. Let it be remembered, that God's dealings with Abraham and his descendants were intended, not merely for their sole instruction, but for that of the surrounding nations; not merely to inform those, in whose hands the inspired account of those transactions was *subsequently* placed, but those also, who were actual *spectators* of these events. Let it also be considered, that we have *special* authority for asserting this, in the case before us. For it is announced to Moses: “The *Egyptians* shall “*know* that *I am the Lord*, when I stretch “forth my hand upon Egypt, and bring out “the children of Israel from among them.”⁸ And of Pharaoh it is said: “in very deed for “this cause have I raised thee up, for to show “in thee my power; and that my *name may* “*be declared throughout all the earth.*”⁹

⁸ Exod. vii. 5.⁹ Exod. ix. 16.

What, then, was the *practical* effect, of these extraordinary and awful dispensations, on the minds of the Egyptians? The remarkable declaration, just quoted, was made, when the plague of the Hail was predicted: and immediately after it is added:—he that *feared* the word of the Lord, among the servants of Pharaoh, made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: and he that regarded not the word of the Lord, left his servants and his cattle in the field.”⁶

Thus, those of them, who, studied the *character* of Jehovah; *collected*, from his *proceedings* in this case, that he would treat them *according* to their *conduct*, and not according to irrespective decrees: and on this conception, they evidently acted, in endeavouring to escape the plague. Nor do we find their views, or the conduct, condemned by the sacred historian. This impression must have been further established, by every subsequent display of Pharaoh’s unpardonable obstinacy, and of it’s consequent punishment.

Nor was the final catastrophe a litte calculated to fix these views; while with *discriminating* justice, it was *confined* to *those alone*, who followed their presumptuous monarch in his *irreclaimable* and rebellious career; and on those, it developed the full and fearful

⁶ Exod. ix, 20, 21.

measure of final retribution,—a retribution, of which it is expressly declared, that it was meant to vindicate God's glory, in his dealings with sinners. "The Egyptians shall know "that I am the Lord, when I have gotten "me *honour* upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, "and upon his horsemen."⁷

Thus, these miraculous judgments, were so little consistent, with the notion of *unconditional* decrees, that they were evidently connected with, and *respective* of the conduct, of the the persons concerned.

And thus it appears, that, on the consideration of all the *facts* of this eventful history, no candid spectator, could have come to any other conclusion than this: that the Almighty displayed towards the relentless tyrant of his chosen people, not merely justice, but long suffering mercy; though, at the same time, he made use of him, (as any just and wise governor would, of any notorious offender,) to exhibit to the Israelites, and to the believing Egyptians, his own power, wisdom, and justice; in rescuing his persecuted and afflicted people, and in visiting their wicked oppressors, with a vengeance awful and final, though long delayed.

But, on what, is the opposite opinion founded?

⁷ Exod. xiv. 18.

In complete violation of the preceding rules, it throws *facts* and *deductions* from *facts* aside, and rests exclusively, on Metaphysical and overstrained deductions, from detached and doubtful expressions—expressions, which at the time (for they were not as yet committed to writing) could have been known, to but few of the Israelites, and most probably to none of the Egyptians—expressions, therefore, which could have had no influence, on *their* views, of the divine proceedings in this case. Now, will it be said, that the *subsequent* Revelation of these expressions, was meant to convey to us, a totally opposite view of these transactions, from that, which the *facts* themselves presented?—Will it be argued, that such a deliberate contradiction as this, was indeed intended?—Of that God, who “is the same yeseterday, to-day, and for ever,” who is without “variableness or shadow of turning;” of him, will it be asserted, that he did indeed design, to exhibit his moral government, in one light, by his miraculous Providences; and in a totally opposite light, by his recorded words—in one view, to the Egyptians; and in quite the contrary, to the Israelites.—As a God of justice to his subjects of those days; but to us, as a God of unconditional predestination? It is, I think, unnecessary to answer the question. Therefore, when we see it stated, that “God

“hardened Pharaoh’s heart;” and yet, find from the *facts*, that each judgment did really compel him, to yield at least a temporary, though perhaps only a feigned and hypocritical submission: we must, I think, in fair reasoning, conclude, that this hardening, was only a just judgment, on his impenitence and dissimulation—the *consequence*, not the *cause* of his crimes—the award of retributive justice; not the relentless execution, of an arbitrary, irrespective decree.

Other, and perhaps, more obvious instances might be adduced: but these are sufficient, to illustrate the bearing, of the principles laid down.

Omitting, then, any further consideration of individual cases, I would request your attention, while I examine, in a very brief manner, whether the doctrine of irrespective election—not to *present* advantages, but, to *final* rewards or punishments, either temporal or eternal—is consistent, with the *revealed* account, of God’s *actual dealings* with his chosen people.

Look then, at the most *prominent* features of the history of Israel, from the calling of Abraham, to their final dispersion. We find, that God’s favoured people, were blessed with great and exalted privileges, both *spiritual*

and *temporal*. That these privileges, were in no degree merited by themselves. For, to such advantages, were the children of Abraham *elect-ed, before* they were born ; as it is written ; “ in “ Isaac,” (the child of promise, not of the flesh) “ shall the seed be called : ” and again, “ Jacob “ have I loved, and Esau have I hated ; ” and this, as the Apostle argues, “ *before* they had “ done any good or evil.” But we find also, that although the *first gift* of these privileges was unmerited and *irrespective*, yet the *subsequent* continuance of them, and the *ultimate treatment* of those who possessed them, were always regulated, with a reference to the use, or abuse, which they made of them ; and so, were not *irrespective*, but strictly *retributive*. So far indeed, was the contrary supposition from the truth, in point of fact : so far was the enjoyment of these privileges from conferring an exemption, from the claims of holiness, or the awards of justice : so far from conveying a charter “ to enjoy the pleasure of sin for “ a season, ⁸ ” without forfeiting the promised inheritance for ever—a license to fall foully, but not to perish finally—that it seems, on the contrary, to have rendered their offences more heinous in the sight of God—their temporary chastenings, more severe—and their *ulti-*

⁸ Heb. xi. 25, 26.

mate rejection, more decisive and unmitigated. Compare their punishments for example, even with those inflicted, on the polluted, and justly devoted Canaanites. When was it heard, even among these, that the Lord should “make a new thing, as in the matter of “Korah, Dathan, and Abiram;” and that the earth should “open her mouth, and swallow “them up, with all that appertained unto them:”—or that thousands should be swept away by the plague, as it were in a moment—or that multitudes should be destroyed by fiery serpents—or that a whole nation should be doomed to wander for forty years—to waste and to perish in the wilderness?

Even after they were settled in the promised land, where all the blessings of election were unboundedly bestowed on them—did these cover their sins, or hide their iniquities?

Look at their various spoliations and defeats, when they forgot God, and turned to Idols. Look at the captivity of Judah, and the everlasting exile of Israel. Behold the awful havoc, and the final destruction, of the holy city of God; where he had delighted “to place “his name, to dwell there;” and where, nevertheless, were fulfilled the fearful predictions of Moses; “thou shalt eat of the fruit of thine “own body, the flesh of thy sons and thy “daughters, which the Lord thy God hath “given thee; so that the man that is tender

“ among you, and very delicate, his eyes shall
“ be evil towards his brother, and toward the
“ wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant
“ of his children,” “ in the siege and in the
“ straitness wherewith thine enemies shall
“ distress thee.”⁹

Lastly—Cast your eyes over the kingdoms of the earth, and behold this people, enduring a never ending punishment—cast off by their God, who once delighted in them—persecuted and trodden down, through every climate under heaven—a nation “scattered and peeled,” “an astonishment, a proverb, a bye word” and “a hissing”—in whom, day after day during these Eighteen Hundred years, has been fulfilled, and is fulfilling, the prediction; “among, “these nations thou shalt find no ease, neither “shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the “Lord shall give thee a trembling heart, and “failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind; and thy “life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou “shalt fear day and night, and thou shalt have “none assurance of thy life; in the morning “thou shalt say, would God it were even! and “at even thou shalt say, would God it were “morning! for the fear of thy heart wherewith “thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine “eyes which thou shalt see.”¹

These are *His* witnesses: “Go to them, and

⁹ Deut. xxviii. 53, 54. ¹ Ibid. 65, 66, 67.

ask them, whether the *peculiar privileges* conferred on his *chosen* people, have saved them, from the demands of his holiness, or the awards of his justice. And, shall not their trembling frames, their subdued spirits, their abandoned hopes, their outcast wanderings—"without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without a teraphim;"²—shall not all these be a sufficient answer?—and do not they fearfully verify the warning, delivered by the mouth of David, three thousand years since; "the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever!"³

Now, let it be remembered, that the Apostle not only declares the deep interest we have in these events, by the assurance contained in the text, that they "were written for our admonition;" but in the context, and in many other places, he draws a close parrallel, between God's dealings with the Jewish, and with the Christian Churches.

He shows, that Christians have been *elected to privileges*, much more glorious, than those of Israel. "He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath

² Hosea, iii. 4.

³ 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

“ chosen us in him before the foundation of the world ;”⁴ “ even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, as he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people which were not my people, and her beloved, which was not beloved.”⁵ So glorious, indeed, are these privileges—as an Evangelist has shown---that though “ among them that are born of women there had not arisen a greater than John the Baptist, yet he that is least in the kingdom of Heaven, is greater than he.”⁶

Like those of Israel, also, these privileges are the gifts of *free* and *undeserved* grace. “ Wherefore remember that ye, being in times past, Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision,” “ were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, but now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ,” “ who came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.”⁷ “ What shall we say, then ? that the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith ;” “ that

⁴ Ephes. i. 3, 4. ⁵ Rom. ix. 24, 25. ⁶ Matt. xi. 11.

⁷ Ephes. ii. 11, 12, 13, 17.

“ he might make known the riches of his
 “ glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had
 “ afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he
 “ hath called, not of the Jews only, but also
 “ of the Gentiles.”¹ But the parallel does not
 stop here ; for, the same Apostle hath thus
 warned us : “ Now these things were our
 “ examples, to the intent we should not
 “ lust after evil things, as they also lusted,
 “ neither let us commit fornication, as some of
 “ them committed, and fell in one day three
 “ and twenty thousand. Neither let us *tempt*
 “ *Christ*, as some of them also tempted, and
 “ were destroyed of serpents. Neither mur-
 “ mur ye, as some of them also murmured,
 “ and were destroyed of the destroyer.”² “ For
 “ I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am
 “ the Apostle of the Gentiles,” “ and if some
 “ of the branches be broken off, and thou
 “ being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in
 “ among them, and with them partakest of the
 “ root and fatness of the olive tree ; boast not
 “ against the branches. But if thou boast,
 “ thou bearest not the root, but theroot thee.
 “ Thou wilt say then, the branches were
 “ broken off, that I might be grafted in.
 “ Well ; because of *unbelief* they were broken
 “ off ; and thou standest by *faith*. Be not
 “ *high minded*, but fear ; for if God *spared*

¹ Rom. ix. 30, 23, 24.

² 1 Cor. x. 6, 8, 9, 10.

“ *not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness; if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*”³

Thus, the parallel seems to be complete; and for a due understanding of God's Election of us Christians, we are evidently referred, to his *actual* dealings with his *chosen* people of old. And thus, the question is rescued, from the unintelligible and endless disputes of abstract metaphysicks, and resolved into an historical inquiry, how far the Omnipotent has been pleased, by *revealed facts*, to declare his intentions, in this particular.

That such a parallel is drawn, can hardly, I think, be denied, by any candid investigator of Scripture; though all may not, perhaps, agree on the conclusions, to which it conducts.

To me it seems, that, in fair reasoning, they can be no other than these. That, though the sovereign disposer of events may, and actually does—in spiritual matters, as well as in temporal—in the world of Grace, as well as in the world of nature—distribute his inestimable blessings, in various and widely-different de-

³ Rom. xi. 13, 17, to 22. See also, Heb. iii. 17 to iv. 1.

grees—giving to one man “ten talents,” to to another “five,” and to another only “one;” yet, that in his *final* awards—whether nations, churches, or individuals be in question—he will deal with *all*, according to the *use* they shall have made, of his free and undeserved gifts; setting one over “ten cities, and another over “five cities,” but casting “the *unprofitable* servant, into outer darkness, where “shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”⁴ “For he will render to every man according “to his deeds: to them, who by patient “continuance in well doing, seek for glory, “and honor, and immortality, eternal life; “but unto them that are contentious, and do “not obey the truth, but obey unrighteous- “ness; indignation and wrath; tribulation and “anguish, upon *every soul* of man that doth “evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gen- “tile: but glory, honor, and peace, to every “man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and “also to the Gentile; for there is *no respect* of “*persons* with God.”⁵

Even those, who would not agree in the full extent of the views here stated, (and stated, as as it seems to me, on the *safest* grounds, because deduced from the general testimony, of a long, conspicuous, and intelligible course of

⁴ Matt. xxv. 15—30. ⁵ Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

revealed *facts*;) however they may fancy themselves able, to show from metaphysical speculations, or detached texts, that *irrespective* and *arbitrary* decrees form the *secret* basis of God's moral government; even those must, I think, admit, that this government, as displayed in the *events* alluded to, has been at least *apparently* conducted, as if no such decrees existed. For all these revealed dealings of providence show, that he does, in *fact*., command, admonish, exhort, *punish*, and *reward*, not merely the generality of mankind, but his own *chosen* people, in the *same manner* as if no such decrees influenced his proceedings, or had any existence whatsoever. Consequently---arguing by the philosophical principles already laid down---we are bound to conclude, from the things *best known* to us; from the obvious unsophisticated meaning, of plain *facts*—*facts revealed* for that very purpose—“written for our admonition,”—we are bound, I say, to conclude, that it is the intention of providence, that all men should *reason* and *act*, *as if* such irrespective decrees had *no existence* whatever.⁶

⁶ It is worthy of remark, that Calvin, in his attempts to derive from Scripture, the doctrine of Absolute Predestination to *eternal* happiness or misery, is obliged to abandon the proof from *facts*; and to confine himself to *overstrained deductions* from *insulated texts*.

On the whole, it seems to me, that in estimating the doctrines of Revelation, too little attention is paid, to the *facts* of Scripture. Some are inclined to omit even the Gospel and

He is compelled to admit, that the calling of Abraham, and the preference of Jacob, refer to their *whole* posterity. 'The declaration, "Jacob have I loved," respects the whole posterity of the patriarch, whom the prophet there opposes to the descendants of Esau.' (Inst. B. iii. s. 7—Allein's Trans. vol. II. p. 409.) And in sect. 5, having defined Election, he adds—"This, God hath not only testified in particular persons, but hath given a specimen of it in the *whole posterity* of Abraham,' &c. In sect. 6, he admits that *many* of those *so elected*, as Ishmael, Esau, Saul, were afterwards *rejected*; and adds—"I grant, it was by their *own crime and guilt* that Ishmael, Esau, and persons of similar characters, *fell from adoption*; because the *condition* annexed was, that they should faithfully keep the covenant of God, which they perfidiously violated.' (P. 407.) But yet he requires us to admit this *temporal, defectible* election, as a kind of type, or "specimen of the election which can *never fail* of attaining it's full effect." (P. 409.)

I trust, that the impropriety of arguing from such analogies as these, has already been sufficiently pointed out. (Sup. p. 118—122.) But in the present case, the analogy, if admitted at all, must be admitted in it's *full* extent; and when so considered, would really make *against* Calvin. For, it would show, that the subjects of *eternal*, as well as those of *temporal* election, might nevertheless be *ultimately rejected*.

Calvin evidently felt the weakness of his arguments, in this respect; and, after many efforts to escape the difficulty, he seems to forget, that it was *forced* upon him, by Scrip-

Apostolick narratives, and to confine us solely to the Epistles; while greater numbers contend, that we should, at all events, exclude the Old Testament history. Many of the Sects, and Heresies, that divide the Christian Church, have arisen from, and are supported by, the contempt that has been thus heaped, on some parts of God's sacred word, with the *carnal* view, of building up *human* systems upon the remainder.

We can hardly expect to find these false views generally corrected, till there shall arise in the Christian Church, a numerous body of witnesses to God's truth, who shall be *naturally* separated from all sects—essentially exempted from any tendency to these errors—and possessed of a preponderating, because a providentially recognised authority, as expositors of Holy Writ. Now such may be looked for, in that people, to whom were at first “committed “the oracles of God,”⁷ whenever it shall

ture history itself; and he advises his “readers to adopt no “prejudices on either side, till it shall appear from adduced “*passages* of Scripture, what sentiments ought to be “entertained.” (P. 410.) He then immediately proceeds in the following chapter, to produce his authorities; which consist, not of facts, but of *insulated texts*, and *metaphysical* deductions therefrom. And he thus manifestly abandons the plain *facts* of Scripture History, as unfavourable to his views.

⁷ Rom. iii. 2.

please providence, to bring them back, as a nation, into the fold of Christ.

“ For it shall come to pass” (saith the prophet)
“ in the *last days*, that the mountain of the
“ Lord’s house shall be established in the top
“ of the mountains, and shall be exalted above
“ the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.
“ And many people shall go and say, come ye,
“ and let us go up to the mountain of the
“ Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob;
“ and he will teach us of his ways, and we
“ will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall
“ go forth the law, and the word of the Lord
“ from Jerusalem.”⁸ If, (as many believe) a
more literal and complete accomplishment of
this prophecy is to take place, than any it has
yet received; we may reasonably expect, that
it’s fulfilment will establish God’s ancient peo-
ple, as the head of the Christian Church. If so,
it is not to be supposed, that they will then, at
once, and for the first time, expunge from their
recollection, the awful and practical lessons which
they have been receiving, during so many ages
past, from the God of their fathers. When
they shall have really entered into their “ rest,”
it shall no more be said of them—“ It is a
“ people that do err in their hearts, for they
“ have not *known my ways*.”⁹ When they have
learned, to set up Christ on the throne of

⁸ Isaiah ii. 2, 3. ⁹ Ps. xcv. 10. Heb. iii. 10, 17.

David, and to know, that “a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of his kingdom”¹—when they understand, that “the Lord God of Israel, hath visited and redeemed his people,” that they “might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of their life;”² they surely will not forget, that the same spiritual rock was with them in the wilderness, and “that rock was Christ;”³—that “in all their affliction, he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity, he redeemed them: and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.”⁴ On the contrary, in “that day,” *their* song shall be—“Praise the, Lord, call upon his name, declare his *doings* among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord: for he hath *done excellent things*: this is known to all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitants of Zion: for great is the HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL in the midst of thee.”⁵ Thus, when they have “turned to the Lord,” that vail, which until this day remaineth upon their hearts, “in the reading of the Old Testament,” shall be “done away in Christ:”⁶ and both from their previous experience, their deeper

¹ Heb. i. 8. ² Luke i. 68—75. ³ 1 Cor. x. 4.

⁴ Isaiah lxiii. 9. ⁵ Isaiah xii. 4, 5, 6.—in connexion with the preceding chapter. ⁶ 2 Cor. iii. 14, 16.

repentance, their more abounding love, and their restoration to more exalted favour—they shall appear in the “City of the great King,”² as the faithful witnesses of his covenants—the venerable memorials of his moral government—and the experienced interpreters of his Holy Will.

From the natural influence of such a consummation, and of all its concomitant circumstances; it may not, perhaps, be too sanguine, to anticipate, under Divine Grace, for the Church of Christ, a resulting unity and harmony of doctrine, a simplicity of Faith, a sincerity of Profession, and a “beauty of Holiness,”³ such as it has never yet been blessed with. Sects and heresies shall then merge in this universal church. And the beams of Gospel light, which, passing through *their* mediums, have hitherto been distorted and discoloured, shall in her be re-united, and transmitted in cloudless and vivifying lustre, to all her children.

I shall now conclude, with a few practical deductions from what has been said.

I. The preceding observations furnish us with an answer, to an objection against the sacred writings, common amongst unbelievers.

² Matt. v. 35.

³ 1 Chron. xvi, 29.—Ps. cx, iii.

They imagine, that a short system of abstract truths, and moral injunctions, would possess higher claims to inspiration, than the confused mass of strange and incredible facts, (as they represent them) which have been forced into an unnatural union, to form the Canon of Scripture.

It has, I think, been sufficiently shown, both in the commencement, and the progress of this discourse, that Revelation, in order to be intelligible in itself, and in its practical applications, must to a certain extent, have been *gradually* promulgated; and must also have been exemplified, by a sufficient number of striking instances, recorded on inspired authority. All this has been done, in the word of God, as we possess it, and could not, as far as we can perceive, have been effected—at least to any purposes equally *practical*—on the system of abstract statements, which they propose.

The wisest of those, who possessed not inspiration, but who understood human nature, have shown by their *own* efforts, the propriety of the Scripture method. The Sages of ancient and modern times, have found even fictitious narratives, a useful medium of instruction for the youthful and unlearned.—How much more impressive, as well as important, are the simple and affecting histories

of the Sacred volume.—What abstruse definitions, could have held up to our admiration, the “beauty of Holiness,” and the ultimate happiness of virtue, as we behold them depicted, in the life and character of Joseph—the self-abasement of true repentance, as in the sorrows and submissive sufferings of David—the consolations and efficacy of prayer, as in Daniel and Elijah—the heroism of Faith, as in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,—and the sovereignty of Divine Providence, as in the abasement and restoration of Nebuchadnezzar?

II. It may, however, to the foregoing objection, be further answered; that the *form*, in which Scripture conveys instruction, is not only more *intelligible* than any abstract treatise, but more calculated to *win the heart and affections*.

It has been remarked, that example is more influential than precept. Perhaps, the cause may be, that it is not only more easily understood, but more deeply felt, and more permanently remembered. Mere abstract doctrine, dealing in generals, more than in particulars—in notions, more than in realities—addresses itself rather to the head, than to the heart. It furnishes nothing, to captivate the imagination, while present—nothing for the memory to repose upon, while absent. In it's first an-

nouncement, it awakens but little emotion; and therefore its repetition can scarcely contribute, to stimulate hope, or to foster the affections. But the exhibition of *character*—either in real life, or in faithful narrative—invigorates the conceptions, animates the feelings, and communicates to the lessons of morality, all the interest of sympathy, and all the permanency of association.

III. It is probable, therefore, that we never could have so fully appreciated, the Attributes of Deity,---which are so calculated to win back the apostate soul to God—if we had not beheld them, embodied, and sojourning amongst us, in the person and character of Christ.

How could we have learned to estimate his power, if we had not seen him control the elements, heal the sick, and raise the dead?

If he had not worshipped with us in the Temple—taught us in the wilderness;—and instructed us in his journeyings—how could we have said “one to another, did not our hearts
“burn within us, while he talked with us by
“the way, and while he opened to us the
“Scriptures?”⁴

How could we have understood the tenderness of his sympathy, if we had not seen him

⁴ Luke xxiv. 32.

weep at the grave of Lazarus, and mourn, as a sorrowing parent, over rebellious Jerusalem? How could we have comprehended the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the wonderful sacrifices of his love; if we had not witnessed him bearing our griefs, and carrying our sorrows; wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities—if we had not followed him to the garden of Gethsemane, and marked the shuddering agony that swept over his soul, while he stood before God, as the substitute for sinners—if we had not heard, from the Cross on Calvary, that startling cry—at which, the earth trembled, and the sun turned pale—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.?”

IV. Lastly; it has been observed in a former discourse, that, we may hope to have our knowledge of God, greatly increased in a future state, by our obtaining access to displays of his power and majesty, beyond our present observation. Revelation seems to confirm this conjecture. And it shows, that this shall consist; not, in the communication, of any further *abstract* views of the Divine Attributes—not in the proof, or developement, of eternal irrespective decrees—but, in the permission, to behold in Christ, the unclouded concentration of Divine Glory and Goodness.

Now ; we are come to Christ on the Cross ; but then, to the Lamb “ in the midst of the “ *throne* ” of God ⁵—now to “ Jesus the mediator “ of the new covenant ; ” ⁶ but then to Jesus in the glory, which he had with the Father “ before the world was.” ⁷ —For then “ God “ shall be all in all ; ” ⁸ and the Father and the Son shall be ONE in Regal Dignity, in Glory, and in Worship. In *Regal Dignity*, for “ the “ *Throne* of GOD and of the LAMB shall be in ” the new Jerusalem, “ and his servants shall serve “ him, and they shall see his face.” ⁹ In *Glory*—for “ the glory of God ” shall “ lighten it, “ and the Lamb is be the light thereof ; and “ the nations of them that are saved, shall walk “ in the light of it, and the kings of the earth, “ do bring their glory and honour unto it.” ¹ In *Worship*—for “ the Lord God Almighty, “ and the Lamb are the temple of it,” ² “ and “ every creature which is in heaven, and on the “ the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all “ that are in them,” shall say, “ *blessing* and “ *honour* and *glory* and power be unto *him* “ that *sitteth* on the THRONE, and unto the “ *Lamb*, for ever and ever.” ³

Thus “ shall the *pure* in heart SEE God ; ” ⁴ and when Christ shall appear, they that “ *be*

⁵ Rev. v. 6, ⁶ Heb. xii. 24. ⁷ John xvii. 5.

⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 28. ⁹ Rev. xxii. 3, 4, ¹ Rev. xxi. 23, 24.

² Rev. xxi. 22,—³ v. 13, iv. 10, 11. ⁴ Matt. v. 8.

“*like him*” “shall see him as he is;”⁵ and then in the fullest and sublimest sense, shall his people enjoy “the light of the *knowledge* of the “*glory of God* in the *face of Jesus Christ*,”⁶ then they shall see “face to face,” “and know “even as they are known.”⁷

Let those, then, before whom have been set by grace, “the unsearchable riches of Christ,”⁸ value above all other sciences, “the excellency “of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.”⁹ Laying aside, the useless and unprofitable perplexities of metaphysical inquiries, which only lead to “questions and strifes of words; whereof “cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, “perverse disputings;”¹ let them apply themselves more and more, to the study and imitation of *His* character, who is “the image of the “invisible God;”² whose glory is “as the glory “of the only begotten of the Father, full of “grace and truth:”³ that being “rooted and “grounded in love,”⁴ they may “be filled “with all the fullness of God”⁵—that being “conformed to the image of his Son,”⁶ they may look for “the appearing of our Lord Jesus

⁵ 1 John iii. 2. ⁶ 2 Cor. iv. 6. ⁷ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

⁸ Ephes. iii. 8. ⁹ Phil. iii. 8. ¹ 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5.

² Col. i. 15. ³ John i. 14. ⁴ Ephes. iii. 17.

⁵ Ephes. iii. 19. ⁶ Rom. viii. 29.

“ Christ: which in his times he shall show,
“ who is the blessed and only potentate, the
“ King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only
“ hath immortality, dwelling in the light which
“ no man can approach unto; whom no man
“ hath seen or can see: to whom be honour
“ and power everlasting. Amen.”⁷

⁷ 1 Tim. vi. 14, 15, 16.

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